

Aubrey Beardsley's Images of New Women
in the Yellow Book

Ph.D Thesis
History of Art
University College London
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June 1985

Abstract

The much publicized debate surrounding Beardsley's illustrations for the first four volumes of the Yellow Book is analyzed as a manifestation of the ongoing debate over the 'Woman Question'. The time frame investigated spans the Bodley Head's launching of the magazine in April 1894, until Beardsley was fired as art editor the following April because of his connections with Oscar Wilde, whose sensational trial preoccupied the London media. With few exceptions (27 out of 31), Beardsley's illustrations for the Yellow Book were pictures of women which the magazine's reviewers, buyers and readers tended to identify with the emancipated 'New Woman' of the nineties.

This concept of the 'New Woman' who demanded cultural and social equality with men, is first examined in relation to the feminist movement and the social status of women during the 1890s. Then various literary, theatrical, and journalistic representations of 'advanced' women are compared to prevailing stereotypes of 'natural' or 'normal' females. The predominantly middle-class interest in both the 'Woman Question' and the Yellow Book is discussed as important parts of newly emerging alternative positions which were rapidly fragmenting the literary market-place. Much of the ^{the} outrage surrounding Beardsley's pictures is attributed to the fact the quarterly was unexpectedly purchased by a new category of unsuspecting, middle-class consumers who had previously borrowed most of their reading material from the carefully vetted lists of circulating libraries. In addition, the public response to the different categories of Beardsley's women - his images of women reading, prostitutes and other sexual 'deviants', actresses, and masqueraders, is studied in detail.

Some contemporaries connected Beardsley's illustrations with other 'deviant' socio-cultural developments (e.g. New Art, New Literature, New Theatre, socialism and decadence), all of which were seen to be directly undermining the moral fabric of society by upsetting existing social and sexual norms. Some implications of these repeated associations are explored.

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Aknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance given by my supervisors Dr. Thomas Gretton and Dr. William Vaughan. Both provided precisely the right mixture of encouragement, constructive criticism, and helpful insights. Their generous contribution is deeply appreciated.

I am greatly indebted to Lynn Nead with whom I discussed many ideas at different stages. Her critical acumen helped me to strengthen my arguments, and provided much needed support in the development of feminist perspectives. In this latter vein, I would also like to express my gratitude to Annie Coombes and Tamar Garb for many stimulating discussions.

Thanks are also due to Anthony Hamber for microfilming my illustrations, and to Mr. John Westmancoat and the staff of the British Newspaper Library at Colindale for providing useful research suggestions, and assistance retrieving items, photocopying and photographing.

Finally, I would like to thank Jeff Jutai whose good-natured skepticism and sense of humour made researching and writing that much easier.

Introduction

The Yellow Book,...is, we suppose, destined to be the organ of the New Literature and the New Art. [Times (April 20, 1894), p. 3.]

All last Spring newspapers and magazines teemed with articles, controversies, correspondence about the emancipation of our wives and daughters. Some foolish person hit upon the phrase the "new" woman, and the town reverberated with it.

[Speaker (September 8, 1894), p. 270.]

Newness was not confined to literature, art, and women, but also applied to particular types of drama, poetry, morality, and politics. The adjective 'new' or its interchangeable synonym 'advanced' implied an alternative and often radical stance vis-a-vis traditional mainstream opinion. It was both a term of positive self-definition, and one of negative abuse, depending on the position of its user. In fin de siècle writing, the latter predominated since newness was invariably identified with a deviant minority that threatened the existing fabric of society. Such was certainly the case in the spring of 1894 when two of the most controversial signs of newness - the Yellow Book, a periodical published by the Bodley Head, and the New Woman, a symbol of female emancipation, made their public debut. As indicated by the above quotations, both phenomena initiated stormy public debates that were waged in the pages of the national press - through articles, advertisements, reviews, cartoons, interviews, and letters to the editor. The sheer size and intensity of the commentary are immediately striking. Clearly these symbols raised pressing problems that simultaneously demanded and defied

effective resolution.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the controversy surrounding Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations of women published in the first four volumes of the Yellow Book which appeared at quarterly intervals between the Aprils of 1894 and 1895. Twenty-seven out of thirty-one of Beardsley's contributions to the Yellow Book were pictures of women, and these seem to have carried distinctly 'advanced' connotations as a careful examination of the reviews will demonstrate. These images formed a crucial point of intersection for various debates on the 'new'. Reactions ranged from enthusiastic support to outraged hostility. By resurrecting this debate and socially locating the participants, this research will explore the role played by these and other popular images of New Women in the formation of late Victorian sexual ideologies and class identities. It should be emphasized that this is a study of visual effectiveness concentrating on how a particular body of imagery was produced, circulated and mobilized by different social groups.

But is there anything new to add to the familiar terrain of the Yellow Book? Modern cultural commentators have been scarcely less obsessed with these issues than their nineteenth century counterparts. This is especially evident in the numerous art historical analyses of Aubrey Beardsley's Yellow Book work which has been viewed as the epitome of the decadent nineties. Although by no means as large as the body of modern Beardsley scholarship, increasing attention has also been paid to the importance of New Women's literary and theatrical undertakings.¹

How can yet another study in an already overcrowded field be justified?

The answer is both practical and polemical. It is the contention of this research that the repetition of a certain brand of Beardsley monograph has fostered a mythology that sets out to obscure the social impact of these images. It will be argued that this thorny question of social impact has been ignored largely because it undermines a number of conservative art historical assumptions regarding artistic value, and the creative process. In practical terms, previously unexamined material concerning the Yellow Book's precise location in the literary market-place calls for a serious reassessment of its critical reception. The venture's significance was not that it shocked a monolithic and prudish Victorian middle class, as art historians have repeatedly alleged, but rather that the old carefully balanced cultural consensus which had united groups within the middle class was being reformulated. This rebuilding was needed in response to growing challenges presented by the advent of a cheap, mass-produced, middle-class literature which was rapidly disseminating a formerly unavailable range of ideas to newly emerging categories of consumers. Perhaps the most controversial of these new ideas was the radical ideology of the New Woman which was promoted in such daring, but accessibly-priced ventures as the Yellow Book. In fact, it will be shown that during this period (1894-1895) the vast bulk of Beardsley's work was produced for this expanding mass market and repeatedly addressed this issue of the New Woman.

Although several major studies have explored New Women's

acting, writing, and themes in literature and theatre, there has been no comparable work in the area of the visual arts. This is probably because there was no similarly identifiable school of 'New Women Artists'.² In fact, most of the numerous images addressing the issue were made by unsympathetic or blatantly hostile men who attacked the emancipated woman in a number of unflattering cartoons and caricatures. Despite the few contributions in the alternative press which did try to present positive views of feminism, the overwhelming trend was one of ridicule and abuse. While such a state of affairs is less than inspirational for the feminist researcher, it is nevertheless important to learn how defenders of patriarchy mobilized to protect their interests against perceived feminist challenges. In this respect, the furore surrounding Beardsley's Yellow Book images provides an excellent case study. Even though the pictures were produced by a fairly well-known male artist, they presented images of women that in many ways defied conventional expectations. This is ascertained by resituating Beardsley's images in the context of the mainstream magazine illustration mentioned above.

It should be noted that in the Yellow Book, Beardsley's contributions amounted to an unorthodox combination of fine art and commercial design. Set off from the text and surrounded by the work of other artists, the inside plates claimed to be individual works of art. This was reinforced by Beardsley's distinctive style, personality and signature. Yet the notion of Beardsley as a fine artist was countered by his design work for the magazine's frontispieces and covers which carried connotations of mere commercial journalism. His ostensibly simple style

(devoid of half-tones) and his willingness to use modern process reproduction (instead of hand engraving) meant that the half-way category of master craftsman was equally inappropriate. The reviewers' evident confusion over Beardsley's precise artistic status in combination with his much publicized youth and largely unpleasant subject matter generated fears that an undesirable upstart was trying to penetrate the artistic establishment.

Essentially Beardsley's Yellow Book images fall into four categories that will be examined in separate sections. These include: (1) prostitutes, lesbians and other sexual 'deviants', (2) images of women reading that were used to promote the magazine, (3) actresses and theatre-goers, and (4) masqueraders. After defining the disconcerting aspects of these pictures, it is possible to trace how they were negotiated, contained, and dismantled by various groups within the middle-class male establishment.

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The practical consideration of this new material acquires polemical overtones when one realizes this process of containment started in the 1890s continues to operate in the 1980s. Significantly the issue of the New Woman has been consistently overlooked in virtually all of the modern Beardsley literature. To my knowledge, Fraser Harrison has been the only writer to discuss the topic at any length in his introduction to an anthology of reprinted Yellow Book articles which will be discussed

below. A spate of recent Beardsley studies including Stanley Weintraub's Aubrey Beardsley (1976); Brigid Brophy's Beardsley and His World (1976); Kenneth Clark's Best of Beardsley (1979); Miriam Benkovitz's Aubrey Beardsley (1981); and Simon Wilson's Aubrey Beardsley (1983) are all conspicuously silent on the subject. Only Brian Reade in Beardsley (1967) and an article in the Antigonish Review (1970); and James Nelson in The Early Nineties (1971) have made fleeting (i.e. one-sentence) suggestions that a couple of Beardsley's Yellow Book pictures may have depicted New Women. If the issue was as important to the artist and his public as I plan to show, how can we account for its remarkable absence in twentieth century scholarship?

Here I would suggest that the very titles of these studies are a large part of the problem. As monographs which focus on an individual's life and oeuvre, the emphasis is placed on verifying biographical details and artistic authenticity. In such books the construction of the artist governs the narrative as well as the meanings assigned to his/her creations. The discourse is both self-referential and self-contained with meaning circulating endlessly between the creator and created object. In such writing the relationship of the object to the external (i.e. non-artistic) world is curiously absent making the consumption of artistic products a secondary consideration. All too often the opinions of patrons, critics, and viewers are only invoked for comparison with the privileged intentions of the artist which are recognized by a few leading experts (invariably including the art historian).

While artistic intention is certainly a valid area of study it is questionable whether the monograph is the most effective vehicle for tackling it. Of course this depends on one's viewpoint and objectives. If one subscribes to the notion that creativity is an autonomous process, it is logical to write a history of artists consisting of monographs on individual geniuses. On the other hand, if one adopts the structuralist premise that the actions of individuals are governed by their social circumstances, the unified concept of the artist disintegrates as historical circumstances alter. Instead of being the organizing principle the artist and her/his works become one site among many for the construction of multiple meanings.³ These meanings are not static but vary according to the social, and temporal location of a sexed viewer and the prevailing codes and institutions determining the conditions of viewing. Artistic activity no longer takes place in a social vacuum, nor is it particularly privileged since the created object acquires a life of its own in relation to various viewers who may or may not be familiar with its maker. The shift of focus away from the artist facilitates the consideration of similar representations that cross a wide range of visual media and verbal discourses.⁴ Without dwelling on this theoretical watershed, it is obvious that to date nearly all of the art historical writing on Beardsley and the Yellow Book is based on the former premise, while this research accepts the latter.

Unhappily it is not simply a question of the two views peacefully coexisting. From the vantage-point of the second position, three very worrying and historically unjustified premises run through the monographs.

They include: (1) seeing Beardsley as practising mainly within the fine/high art tradition; (2) unproblematically accepting the notion of Victorian sexual repression; and finally (3) taking the repeated assertions of Beardsley's 'perversity' at face value. By examining each of these three assumptions, I hope to show how they combine to produce a pervasive mythology of Beardsley which effectively defuses some of the more subversive implications of his work.

Art historically speaking, to warrant a monograph in the first place it is usually necessary to demonstrate that the subject is indeed a first-rate artist. Otherwise the study is typically expanded to incorporate other items, often taking the 'life and times of...' format. Books which publish selections of masterpieces such as the several 'best of Beardsley' titles are especially dependent on the notion of a well established reputation. Like a box of chocolates, the contents are old favourites carefully chosen and re-presented for renewed pleasure.

Ironically Beardsley's small-scale, mass-produced, pen and ink illustrations do not exactly fit the traditional 'high' art criteria. In terms of the academic hierarchy, pen and ink drawing ranks far below the higher art forms of fresco, oil painting, and sculpture. Furthermore, mass production reduces commercial value which in turn undermines claims to greatness. Finally, the small scale of Beardsley's designs actually led the early formalist critic, Roger Fry, to classify Beardsley as a second-rate artist. Reviewing a Beardsley exhibition, he commented,

This instinct [of minute craftsmanship] in its purest

form rarely makes for the finest art; it is only when controlled by a larger, more genial sentiment for architectural mass that it becomes ennobled, and with Beardsley, in spite of the bold oppositions of his blacks and whites, in spite of his occasional wilful simplification, this rarely occurred.(5)

Clearly Fry scarcely regarded Beardsley as monograph material.

In order to dispell some of these lingering doubts, later art historians seeking to upgrade Beardsley's status have felt obliged to offer the reader repeated assurances that: 'Beardsley dominated the decade and is universally recognized as having been its outstanding genius', or 'He [Beardsley] is as much a master of pen and ink as Goya was of aqua-tint', or finally 'The art of Aubrey Beardsley is hors concours. It belongs to no school, nor tradition, to no age nor period.'⁶ Kenneth Clark carries this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. Although his Best of Aubrey Beardsley also trades on the public's familiarity with reproduced versions of Beardsley's works, he asserts that the artist's genius is really located in his original drawings:

The Fat Woman is in the Tate, and a sight of the original shows us how shockingly Beardsley's work has been betrayed by reproduction....In fact most of his designs are not in pure black and white, but are tinted or coloured so that they achieve a subtle effect of tone, and all the early ones contain lines and dots so delicate that they are lost in anything but a full-size photograph and must have driven block makers to despair. In fact - they gave up - they heightened tones, coarsened lines, and sometimes redrew passages which were too subtle for them. (7)

Essentially the thrust of all these comments is the same: the common place illustrator is transformed into a member of the rare artistic species. Nearly all of the texts emphasize his connection to a series of

revered old masters, tracing such stylistic influences as Mantegna, Botticelli, Puvis de Chavannes, Redon, Utamaro, Burne Jones and Rossetti. Significantly this source-spotting ends with the PreRaphaelites. Beardsley's development is suddenly complete. No more comparative examples by other artists interrupt the flow of 'pure' Beardsleys in the text. Thus the denial of school, tradition, age and period actually refers to Beardsley's distance from his contemporaries, rather than the past tradition of 'great art'. R. A. Walker carefully spells this out:

To realise the complete originality of his technique, one must turn to the popular black and white artists of his day, such as Railton or Pennell. These and many other artists before and after them have used their pens as if they were writing. They do not draw, they write their pictures. Their work is a mass of wiry, nervous scribbling, sometimes effective, more often not.(8)

Although Walker does admit that in a few respects Beardsley's work resembles Phil May's outline technique, he ignores other illustrators such as Dudley Hardy who writers of the 1890s repeatedly linked with Beardsley.

Of course it should be emphasized that Beardsley's own 'high artistic' pretensions (i.e. visiting Burne-Jones, cultivating artistic contacts made through the Pennells, collecting rare books, visiting the Paris Salon, being familiar with the 'old masters' and exhibiting at the New English Art Club) has greatly facilitated his wholesale adoption by art historians. Instead ^{of} seeing these moves as a strategy of enhancing his status (and prices), art historians have uncritically accepted his involvement with 'high art', almost totally ignoring the more important

commercial aspects of his production. Since these 'high art' connections have been extensively examined elsewhere I do not propose to dwell on them at any length in the course of this research. However, I would like to stress that for Beardsley, whose origins were lower-middle class, 'fine art' offered an avenue of upward social mobility by introducing him to glittering Society contacts, who shared a common cause of 'art for art's sake'. Whether this strategy was consciously employed by the artist remains a matter for speculation. In any case, it was his commercial design work that provided Beardsley's income during these early years, although later (after he was fired from the Yellow Book) he received 'gifts' from various patrons. Ironically Beardsley's strategy of promoting his designs as 'fine art' which initially worried many establishment art critics of the 1890s ultimately has proven remarkably successful among twentieth century art historians. Evidently from a safe historical distance, Beardsley's mixture of art and design can be viewed as an exception to the fundamental rule that separates commercial hack work from great masterpieces.

↑ [INSERT pp.24b - 25b]

The anxiety to present Beardsley as a transcendent genius ~~has~~
 led monograph writers ^{to} seriously underestimate the importance of the highly competitive market for black and white illustration. In fact, Beardsley's success was based on his shock-value - something he, himself, clearly recognized and frequently mentioned in letters to his friends.⁹ In order to be shocking, Beardsley had to be thoroughly conversant with the latest trends and the expectations of his audience. Although some contemporary critics did identify Japanese or PreRaphaelite

elements in Beardley's style, they also found ample evidence of Cockney coarseness and vulgarity. It was precisely the unexpected overlapping of 'high' art and popular illustration in terms of both form and content that proved so surprising. Like most twentieth century art historians, Beardsley's contemporaries did not want to believe that 'high' art was inextricably connected to mass produced illustration - each defining itself in relation to the other. The problem with Beardsley's Yellow Book images was that they constantly underlined this disconcerting fact by disrupting the specialized codes of representation governing each category.

The analysis of Beardsley's images strictly in terms of 'high' art has also led to misleading and simplistic conclusions concerning their sexually offensive aspects. By ignoring illustrations of similar subjects in competitive books and magazines, art historians have tended to see Beardsley's pictures as exceptionally sensual. Consequently Beardsley has been characterized as an Arch-Decadent and sexual deviant - a classification that naturalizes social inequalities and confirms the notion of artistic genius. In the following discussion I will first examine how art historians have constructed and reworked this myth, and then turn to explore some contrasting views of social historians whose empirical evidence and theoretical models suggest very different ways of approaching Beardley's illustrations.

The prevailing view that Beardsley's work was too erotic for a prudish Victorian audience is again typically expressed by R. A. Walker,

'In his [Beardsley's] day it was the extreme chastity of his line coupled with the then unchastity of the content that caused the public to gasp as from an ice-cold shower.' He reinforces this argument by describing the well known scenario of repressed Victorian sexuality:

The Nineties are really a long time ago....When he [Beardsley] was publishing his shocking Yellow Book drawings, British complacency had not been shaken since the Crimea. The streets of London were mainly of macadam and were full of horse-drawn vehicles; gas lamps flared, crossing sweepers were numerous and golden half sovereigns slipped through one's fingers - or through holes in one's pockets. Ladies did not dine in restaurants, unless to meet their lovers in private rooms. Girls at dances were dutifully returned to their chaperones after every dance, and married women to their husbands. Out of doors, women had to give one hand to the holding of their skirts which would otherwise sweep the ground, while the other was for a parasol or the arm of a gentleman. They were always veiled and gloved. The veil was lifted as far as the nose to allow the partaking of tea when on a call and the gloves were skin tight and had to be put on with powder blown into them. Deportment was the thing, and a mother corrected her schoolgirl daughter if she crossed her legs when seated.

And so the horrific content of his drawings came upon the staid Victorian with a cold shock a younger generation simply cannot imagine. (10)

His conclusion is seductively simple: in an old-fashioned climate like this the sexually explicit was necessarily shocking.

Only recently has this essential article of Beards^sley faith been criticized and reworked by Fraser Harrison. In a short essay on the Yellow Book, he suggests that the problem does not consist of Beardsley's portrayal of sexual details per se, but lies in his 'perverse' approach. In this instance perversity denotes a social position rather than an individual aberration. After discussing several of the literary contributions of New Women writers to the Yellow Book, Harrison

claims that in many respects, Beardsley's images were perceived as the visual equivalent of the female writers' emancipated position:

In his Yellow Book illustrations women predominate as subjects and his attitude to female sexuality was far more direct and provocative than any of the other contributors, which perhaps explains why the reviewers condemned his work so venomously....His women in no way conform to the conventions of Victorian femininity: they are not pure or sweet or noble; they are not motherly or infantile; they do not remotely represent chastity, innocence or sanctity. Nudity in art was acceptable, indeed positively welcome to the Victorians, but Beardsley's women are seldom nude; on the contrary they are deliberately dressed to attract and provoke. His women are eager to be observed. They seem to take the viewer into their confidence, inviting him to share their intimacies; they tease, they challenge, and occasionally they even wink at the onlooker. Above all his women are knowing. They know about sex and are manifestly keen to indulge their knowledge. (11)

Here Harrison breaks with traditional approaches to the Yellow Book and introduces the notion of sexual politics to explain the public response to these works. As pictures of a marginal or deviant female sexuality, they upset the conventional expectations of the average male viewer Harrison has in mind. This idea of the pictures visually challenging the existing distribution of sexual power provides an intriguing new perspective. The images are no longer viewed solely as Beardsley's individual visions, but are seen as points of reference in public debates about femininity. The very existence of such debates indicates that there are problems with the simple model of Victorian sexual repression which pervades virtually all of the Beardsley literature and is even ultimately invoked by Harrison himself.

Unfortunately Harrison forces this suggestive new evidence into

an outdated and inadequate paradigm which ignores class analysis and accepts an essentialist view of sexuality. Inevitably contradictions abound. In spite of recognizing that femininity is a much debated construct, he nevertheless retains the single standard of Victorian femininity that is pure, sweet, and noble. He nowhere acknowledges that this ideal is an expression of middle-class values which were not always shared by such social 'outsiders' as the working class and aristocracy as well as alternative groups within the middle class. However, unlike Walker who evidently thinks that middle-class ideals ruled the lives of all Victorians, Harrison recognizes that not everyone followed such prescriptions. Unfortunately instead of questioning the premise of a single ideal, Harrison interprets this discrepancy as sexual hypocrisy. It is their heroic refusal to accept this hypocrisy that explains why certain groups (i.e. New Women writers) and individuals (i.e. Beardsley) assert their 'more direct' (i.e. true) knowledge of sex. Deviants become martyrs for the cause of sexual liberation. The power struggles of different social groups are subsumed by the greater spectacle of unfolding sexual freedom. Hence we return full circle to the notion of an essential sexuality that is repressed during the Victorian period. Ironically, although Harrison has expressly set out to write a very different kind of history, his new material is constricted by a framework which does not really challenge old assumptions.¹²

In addition to exposing hypocrisy and fighting for modern sexual freedom the deviant sexual martyr also fulfils other functions. In artist's monographs one of the most important is complementing the

romantic view of the artistic genius who struggles against the philistine values of bourgeois society. In Beardsley's case, his perversity proves his artistic greatness. The title of Stanley Weintraub's book, Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse employs this device. Here it should be stressed that Weintraub's view of Beardsley's individual perversity and genius is much more typical than Harrison's exceptional attempt to link Beardsley's work with that of other marginalized social groups. Although Beardsley is frequently discussed in the context of an avant-garde, this group is invariably characterized as a collection of similarly eccentric and isolated individuals possessing neither a common social vision, nor a coherent class identity.

The culmination of this approach is found in Malcolm Easton's Aubrey and the Dying Lady: A Beardsley Riddle (1972). The dying lady of the title refers to Mabel Beardsley, the artist's sister, and the riddle to the question of their incestuous relationship. As Easton explains, despite the lack of existing historical evidence, the task he set himself was to:

to explain the drawings through an account of Aubrey's [note his familiarity with his subject] sexual psychology and his relationships with friends and family. All existing Beardsley studies showed that this must be the next step; but once embarked upon the enterprise I became aware of the daunting lack of material. The letters are far from explicit. We know very little about the artist's friendships...; about his mother and father, almost nothing. (13)

Where historical evidence is weak, Easton supplies the advice of modern medical and psychiatric 'experts', one of whom is described as 'the leading authority on transvestism and transexuality'¹⁴ In addition

to the old litany of transvestism, homosexuality, and infantilism, Easton raises such further possibilities as incest, paedophilia, and hallucinations from either drug abuse or tuberculosis for explaining Beardsley's 'art'. He virtually ignores the contemporary response to Beardsley images, merely noting periodically that they caused a great stir - leaving the impression that perhaps contemporaries read them the same way. For him the meaning of the images lies solely in the isolated creative act.

Significantly it is not only the 'deviant' artist who is heroized but also the art historian who dares to write a candid biography. In the 'Author's Note', Weintraub reveals how the publisher of his earlier biography on Beardsley censored certain relevant pictorial and textual matter on the grounds that it would have offended the sensibilities of 'lady librarians' and hurt sales. Bravely including this material in the second book of the above title, Weintraub observes:

...the climate for publishing has become far more receptive to truth in biography, however explicit....One can hope that female readers - lady librarians included - are, if not were, more sophisticated than that, and can accept as well as understand the permutations of Beardsley's complex and tragic genius, here presented in much more detail than before. (15)

At last, we who have reached sexual nirvana in the third quarter of the twentieth century can examine the quaint and curious taboos of our Victorian ancestors.

II

But is this nirvana and were the Victorians really so uniformly repressed? A growing number of social historians looking at the Victorian period have expressed considerable doubts about this essentialist view of sexuality. At this stage it is worth briefly reviewing their ideas which I feel provide a more sophisticated framework for understanding how Beardsley's Yellow Book illustrations functioned during the mid-1890s. Here I am referring to the writings of Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks and Judith Walkowitz who have argued that the old notion of repression is no longer tenable.¹⁶

The pioneering challenge to this concept appears in Foucault's History of Sexuality which rejects the essentialist definition of sex as a 'natural' force that is subject to various social controls. Instead, Foucault argues that sex must be analyzed as an historical construct that is imbued with the relations of power. Prescriptive definitions of 'male' and 'female' or 'normal' and 'abnormal' are subjectively designed and implemented by particular groups as strategies of power to support material and ideological inequalities within society. Both Walkowitz and Weeks have utilized Foucault's sexual hypothesis to examine specific aspects of Victorian sexual behaviour: the former investigating the controversy surrounding the Contagious Diseases Acts and the latter examining the changing codes of sexual behaviour in Britain since 1800. Although both writers remain critical of Foucault's rather abstract structuralist formulations of power, they convincingly demonstrate the

value of analyzing sexuality as a historical construct that functions as one of several integrally related discourses (i.e. political, economic, scientific etc.) through which power is deployed.

In many respects discarding the theory of 'natural' sexual behaviour can be paralleled to rejecting the notion of transcendent creativity: both open up whole new avenues of social inquiry. Just as the persona of the artist no longer determines the meanings ascribed to her/his works, 'Nature' no longer governs gender.¹⁷ These ideas have serious implications for traditional assessments of Beardsley's Yellow Book illustrations of women which, as I have shown, were principally regarded as controversial examples of a congenital sexual deviance coming to the surface. This attitude has long been an established article of the mythology surrounding the artist, dating from 1894 onwards, when contemporary art critics began emphasizing the exceptionally immoral and degenerate aspects of Beardsley's vision.¹⁸ Paradoxically, while Beardsley utilized the position of sexual deviant to attack prevailing middle-class values, spokespeople for these values utilized this deviance to discredit and marginalize his critique.

Although the art historians cited above are right in arguing that Beardsley's images displayed a sexuality that offended a large number of Victorian viewers, I believe that they are mistaken in attributing this to Beardsley's individual transgression of acceptable sexual mores. While Beardsley and his illustrations may or may not have appeared perverse, depending upon one's point of view, this emphasis on sexual deviance as an

explanation of the controversy seems problematic in several respects. First, it presupposes the existence of a single norm which scarcely corresponds to the multiplicity of Victorian sexual discourses that varied widely according to specific factors such as time, place, and the social status of the participants. The prostitutes, actresses, masqueraders and other sexually deviant women that Beardsley depicted were not inherently abnormal, but rather were a vital part of Victorian society with their own sexual values and practices. Although many members of these groups realized they were transgressing respectable 'norms', this does not mean their behaviour was 'unnatural'. If the middle class found it necessary to marginalize them, it must be seen as a class bias, not as an historical truth. Furthermore, the tendency to isolate Beardsley's 'deviance' obscures the fact that these images were part of a growing trend within certain sectors of the middle class to question the class's rigid construction of gender differences and the relations of power between the sexes and classes.

The following investigation will demonstrate that the notion of power is crucial to understanding the extent of the controversy surrounding these illustrations. It is a common thread that runs through all four sections. The first, 'New Women as Sexual Deviants', studies the way that alternative or subcultural groups acquire the power to create distinctive identities for themselves which defy middle-class norms. Particular attention will be devoted to feminists and New Women writers whose new-found visibility, like Beardsley's, was problematic. While it provided these women with a clear position to work from, it also

exposed them as targets of ridicule and abuse. The translation from self-definitions to externally imposed stereotypes will be examined with special reference to popular press imagery. The second section will trace how these subcultural groups disseminated their ideas by looking at the case study of the Yellow Book which was the vehicle for Beardsley and several New Women writers. By examining which groups had access to the magazine, it is possible to establish the parameters of the debate, and assess its social effectiveness. Finally the third and fourth sections will consider the two most conspicuous groups of Beardsley's 'deviant' women - actresses and masqueraders which seem to have fascinated viewers of the 1890s. Here I will concentrate on how Beardsley made the already sensitive subject matter of these barely respectable women even more disturbing.

The fact that many nineteenth century discussions of these images started out by examining their artistic and sexual connotations but frequently ended up by raising concerns of class, politics and social order is significant. However reluctant the critics were to discuss these matters, many of Beardsley's contemporaries realized these images challenged the very mainstay of late Victorian society - male middle-class domination. The overt nature of the attack forced them to publicly declare their interests. Such publicity inevitably exposed patriarchal power to new scrutiny. The curious silence of twentieth century art historians on this issue suggests that modern sexual freedom is possibly as mythical as nineteenth century repression.

III

Here it is appropriate to make a few comments on the scope of the material surveyed in the course of this investigation. First of all, as a study of public response, the emphasis has been on examining published records. Articles, reviews, advertisements, interviews and letters to the editor have been more important sources than private letters, diaries and reminiscences, although the latter have been used on occasion to provide additional information or an alternative perspective. ^{↑ [INSERT p. 35b]} Furthermore, this study has only attempted to look at the English, primarily London based, response to Beardsley's Yellow Book images, leaving aside the issue of how foreign observers responded. However, it should be noted that an exception has been made in cases where foreign newspapers and journals were published and sold in London.

In terms of surveying the press, such standard sources as Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory and Sell's Directory of the World's Press provided a basic starting point for London daily and weekly papers. The coverage of major monthlies was usefully charted through the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals and the Waterloo Directory, while that of specialized minor publications is well documented in J.T. Tye's Periodicals of the Nineties. The special category of the women's press, previously ignored in art historical scholarship on Beardsley was approached through Cynthia White's helpful Women's Magazines 1693-1968. Where it has been relevant, the specialized trade journals of publishing and the theatre have been consulted.¹⁹

Introduction Footnotes

1

The literature on Beardsley will be discussed in more detail below. A few recent studies of the issue of New Women's fiction which I have found particularly helpful include: Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982); A. R. Cunningham, 'The New Woman Fiction of the 1890s', Victorian Studies 17 (December 1973): 177-186; Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', Nineteenth Century Fiction 33 (March 1979): 434-453; Lloyd Fernando, 'The Radical Ideology of the New Woman', Southern Review 2 (1967): 206-222; and Patricia Stubbs, Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920 (London: Methuen, 1981 reprint of 1979). The modern scholarship on New Women's theatrical ventures is much scantier. Here Josephine Johnson, Florence Farr: Bernard Shaw's 'New Woman' (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1975) and Julie Holledge, Innocent Flowers: Women in the Edwardian Theatre (London: Virago, 1981) may be cited.

2

The whole issue of why feminist inroads into the visual arts were relatively late compared to those in literature and drama is a complex one which will be further pursued in the second section.

3

For an interesting analysis of this problem in terms of French academic art, consult Adrian Rifkin, 'Ingres and the Academic Dictionary', Art History (June 1983): 153-170.

4

Some recent discussions of the complicated problem of artistic and cultural production and consumption include: Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (London: Sage, 1977 translation of 1970 French edition); Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding', in Culture, Media, Language (London: Hutchinson, 1980): 128-138; Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Methuen, 1980); and Janet Wolff, The Social Production of Art (London: Macmillan, 1979).

5

Roger Fry, 'Aubrey Beardsley's Drawings', in Vision and Design (London, Oxford University Press, 1981 reprint of 1920), p. 164. The original review appeared in the Athenaeum (November 5, 1904): 627-628.

6

The first comment appears in A.E. Gallatin, Aubrey Beardsley: Catalogue of Drawings and Bibliography (New York: Grolier Club, 1945), p. 1; and the latter two are from R.A. Walker, The Best of Beardsley (London: Chancellor Press, 1983 reprint of 1948), p. 20 and p. 9.

7
Kenneth Clark, The Best of Aubrey Beardsley (London: John Murray, 1979), pp. 33-34. This point is also argued forcefully by Malcolm Easton, Aubrey and the Dying Lady: A Beardsley Riddle (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), p. xiii.

8
Walker, Beardsley, p. 10.

9
Repeatedly Beardsley equated his success with public controversy and expressed his pleasure at being discussed in the press. In a letter dated February 15, 1893, Beardsley told his friend G.F. Scotson-Clark that his illustrations have 'made the old black-and-white duffers sit up'. Later in April, 1894 he wrote to Henry James mentioning how he enjoyed the controversy over the first Yellow Book in which 'most of the thunderbolts fell on my head'. See The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley Edited by H. Maas, J.L. Duncan and W.G. Wood. (London: Cassell & Company, 1971), pp. 44 and 68.

10
R.A. Walker, Beardsley, pp. 16-17.

11
Fraser Harrison, ed., The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974), pp. 43-44.

12
Ibid., p. 17. Harrison is especially critical of the focus on individual personalities who operate in an obscured and even obliterated historical landscape.

13
Easton, Aubrey, p. xiii.

14
Ibid., p. xv.

15
Stanley Weintraub, Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p. ix.

16
Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality. (New York: Vintage Books, 1980 translation of 1976 French edition), Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Judith Walkowitz, 'Male Vice and Feminist Virtue - Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Britain,' History Workshop Journal 13 (Spring 1982): 79-93, and Jeffrey Weeks, Sex, Politics and Society (London: Longman's, 1981).

17

Of course these ideas continue to exert a powerful ideological effect by providing appealingly simple and ostensibly persuasive answers. However, it is one thing to accept their explanations, and quite another to critically examine how these myths operate.

18

In addition to numerous contemporary reviews of the Yellow Book which will be discussed at some length in connection with the pictures to which they refer, a striking example of this view from the 1890s appears in an article by Margaret Armour, 'Aubrey Beardsley and the Decadents,' Magazine of Art 20 (1896): 8-12.

19

J.R. Tye, Periodicals of the Nineties: A Checklist of Literary Periodicals Published in the British Isles at Longer than Fortnightly Intervals, 1890-1899 (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1974), and also useful is his unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'Literary Periodicals of the Eighteen-Nineties: A Survey of the Monthly and Quarterly Magazines and Reviews', Oxford University, 1971. Also see Cynthia White, ed. Women's Magazines 1693-1968 (London: Michael Joseph, 1970).

Section One: New Women as Sexual Deviants

The forms of life are subject to law, and a broken law avenges itself by making an end of the law-breaker. The New Woman will not continue long in the land. Like other fashions, she is destined to excite notice, to be admired, criticized and forgotten. The liberty she invokes will be fatal to her....Who would bind himself to spend his days with the anarchist, the athlete, the blue-stocking, the aggressively philanthropic, the political, the surgical woman? And what man would submit to an alliance which was terminable not when he chose, but when his comrade was tired of him? Such are not the ideals to which he has looked up, or the qualities that win his affections. The age of chivalry cannot die, so long as woman keeps her peculiar grace, which is neither rugged strength or stores of erudition, but a human nature predestined to Motherhood. (1)

William Barry's objections to New Women's novels which appeared in the Quarterly Review of July 1894 were shared by most opponents of feminism. By unnaturally usurping male prerogatives, New Women played havoc with the existing structure of society. Fortunately, according to writers like Barry, such hideous phases of female revolt were necessarily short-lived. Ultimately it was the threatening aspects of their character which contained the seeds of their own destruction. Such abnormal freaks and misfits inevitably failed to attract men and reproduce. Given time, the self-correcting laws of nature would eradicate the problem.

In contrast, some spokeswomen for the feminist cause were increasingly skeptical of this natural tyranny. Mona Caird forcefully expressed her objections in an article defending the so-called 'wild women' published in the Nineteenth Century during May, 1892:

...how false are all the inferences of phrases such as 'Nature intends', 'Nature desires'; she intends and desires nothing - she is an abject slave. Man intends,

Man desires, and Nature in the course of centuries has learned to obey....

This dear and cherished appeal to nature, however will never be abandoned by the advocates of the old order while breath remains to them....nature, besides designing women to be mothers, designed men to be fathers; why then, should not the man give up his life to his family in the same wholesale way?...Furthermore, if a woman's functions are to be determined solely by a reference to what is called nature, how, from this point of view, are we to deal with the fact that she possesses a thousand emotional and intellectual attributes that are wholly superfluous to her merely maternal activities?...In the present order of society, speaking roughly, a woman to whom maternity seems unsatisfying or distasteful, has either to bring herself to undertake the task for which she is unfitted, or to deny her affections altogether. To man, the gods give both sides of the apple of life; a woman is offered the choice of the halves - either but not both. (2)

In this passage Caird claimed that nature was a man-made construct selectively invoked to defend male privileges by recognizing only women's ability to bear children and denying their many other attributes. Elsewhere in the article she asserted that it was their restricted social experience, rather than any innate tendencies which channelled women into narrow domestic existences. Staunchly defending those women who bravely ventured into the public arena to demand an extension of their rights, Caird acknowledged that at first their unorthodoxy may have looked outrageous:

The liberal-minded will remember that the claims of a class hitherto subordinate always seem preposterous, and that the more complete has been their exclusion, the more ridiculous will appear their aspirations.(3)

However, looks were deceptive. The problem was society's unreasonable attitudes, not the women's legitimate demands.

This debated notion of the 'natural' lies at the heart of the New

Woman controversy. On the one hand by identifying the natural with existing middle-class ideals of femininity, adversaries of feminism tried to marginalize New Women as unnatural apparitions. On the other hand, by attacking this prevailing notion of the natural, advanced women tried to prevent their alternative views from being automatically ruled out of order. In verbal discourses and visual representations, both groups struggled to have their own definitions recognized and accepted. This struggle ranged from such tactics as openly debating the validity of concepts like 'nature' to identifying one's cause with positive terms (i.e. healthy, sane and normal) leaving their negative counterparts to the opposition. In some cases, usually negative words (i.e. eccentric) could be reclaimed to assert new positive values. Controlling verbal or visual language enabled one to set the terms of the debate. Needless to say, except on rare occasions, it was an uphill struggle for advocates of the New Women's cause who were fighting an entrenched set of ideas from the position of an oppressed minority that had significantly fewer resources at its disposal.

This first section will look at the way the majority of the middle-class dealt with the threat of the New Woman by derogatorily categorizing them as sexually 'deviant' and 'perverse'. First of all, the sociological implications of norms and deviance will be explored in order to clarify how the terms will be used in this study. Then the dominant construct of the middle-class feminine ideal will be traced with a view to demonstrating how feminists in general, and New Women, in particular, refused to follow the behavioural prescriptions for women of their class.

In the third subsection the uneasy relationship between mainstream late Victorian feminism and the New Woman will be reviewed. Although all feminists were perceived as behaving in a less than ideal fashion, there were significant differences between the majority who were active in social purity movements and a smaller number of writers, actresses, and socialists who generally opposed any state regulation of sexual activities. Although the term New Woman was sometimes used indiscriminately to refer to any type of feminist, the substantial differences between the two positions more often led to separate identities and stereotypes. Social purity feminists were typically represented as undersexed spinsters of the prowling prude variety, while emancipated writers and actresses were generally portrayed as oversexed and promiscuous deviants who aggressively asserted their sexuality in masculine ways.

In the fourth subsection, special attention will be devoted to the ways in which the New Woman was visually type-cast in cartoons and caricatures of the popular press. After having established a check-list of 'deviant' characteristics, I will turn to explore the parallel ways Beardsley's Yellow Book illustrations upset middle-class expectations. Especially problematic was the fact that although his women were clearly advanced, they were not the cardboard targets of criticism, humour or attack that featured prominently in the press. Instead Beardsley's images of women appeared frighteningly self-contained and competent. The suspect nature of the artist's sympathies raises the spectre of his own marginal status during the 1890s. Popularly perceived as belonging to a

crowd of perversely effeminate Decadents, Beardsley was as sexually and socially dubious as the women he depicted. Finally the sixth subsection will investigate the connection between stereotypes of the effeminate Beardsley and his images of the masculine New Woman.

I Theories of Sexual Deviance

At this stage, it is useful to return to some of the issues briefly raised in the introduction in order to refine the theoretical model of deviance which will be used in this study. Since art historians rarely venture into such unfamiliar waters, I have turned to some recent sociological research which I will quickly summarize.

In a book on youth subcultures in the 1960s, entitled Folk Devils and Moral Panics, Stanley Cohen has studied the social response to 'deviance' during a period of moral panic which seems quite similar to the moral crisis of the mid-1890s. He starts out by noting that the problem of deviance must be approached skeptically asking such questions as deviant to whom or from what? In addition to observing the relational qualities of the term, he stresses that three definitional questions must also be posed:

...why does a particular rule, the infraction of which constitutes deviance, exist at all? What are the processes and procedures involved in identifying someone as a deviant and applying that rule to him? What are the effects and consequences of this application, both for society and the individual? (4)

It should be noted that Cohen is primarily interested in cases where

deviance is a position assumed in response to societal reactions, rather than in cases where individuals simply behave in unconventional ways. In other words, he is concerned with high-profile deviant groups that are socially recognized and type-cast. This type-casting becomes obsessive during periods of moral panic when the deviant is perceived and represented as a type of folk devil. Cohen describes a situation which in many ways resembles the controversy surrounding the Yellow Book:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to;... (5)

Clearly the media play a crucial role conveying information about the deviant group to the general public. Cohen points out how this information is already preprocessed by the media's 'moral entrepreneurs'. In fact much of the media's so-called news is reports of deviant activities (i.e. sensational crimes, scandals, unusual occurrences) and society's response. It has been suggested that this helps to establish the normative contours of society by providing numerous demonstrations of acceptable moral limits. Finally Cohen points out that media coverage typically escalates the process in which deviant identities become solidified and the social reaction correspondingly more outraged. In quest of bigger and better stories and increased public support, the media tends to amplify the importance of the events.⁶

Other studies, particularly in the area of homosexuality have also focused on the curious relationship between deviance and social control. Paradoxically while the deviant unmistakably defies prevailing social norms, the process of social labelling which identifies the outcast ultimately reinforces the status-quo. In an article on the homosexual role, Mary MacIntosh explains how this works:

The practice of the social labelling of persons as deviant operates in two ways as a mechanism of social control. In the first place it helps to provide a clear-cut, publicized and recognizable threshold between permissible and impermissible behaviour. This means that people cannot so easily drift into deviant behaviour. Their first moves in a deviant direction immediately raise the question of a total move into a deviant role with all the sanctions that this is likely to elicit. Second, the labelling serves to segregate the deviants from others, and this means that their deviant practices and their self-justifications for these practices are contained within a relatively narrow group. The creation of a specialized, despised and punished role of the homosexual keeps the bulk of society pure in rather the same way that the similar treatment of some kinds of criminals helps keep the rest of society law-abiding.(7)

However, it should be realized that social labelling is only one of many legal, economic, and moral strategies that the ruling class uses to regulate sexual behaviour. These can range from legislation (e.g. concerning marriage and property), to such deterrents as the suppression or prosecution of undesirable behaviour (e.g. theatrical censorship, the punishment of sexual offenders) to material incentives for those who conform (e.g. philanthropical aid, welfare state benefits). Although a number of 'private' concerns (e.g. newspapers, moral pressure groups) may be actively involved in the regulation process, it is frequently the state which sets the parametres of the debate through legislative and legal

policy.

In Victorian England, an increasing state intervention in sexual affairs followed a period of rapid overall government growth in terms of staff, agencies and areas of jurisdiction which took place during the 1830s and 1840s.⁸ For the purposes of this research, one of the state's most important new responsibilities was in the field of sexual unorthodoxy. This covered a wide range of 'deviant' behaviour including obscenity, indecent advertising, prostitution, and male homosexuality.⁹ The successful management of these sexual 'problems' became a key criterion for assessing government efficiency and social stability. There is ample evidence suggesting that the English ruling classes believed that the nation's economic and political well-being rested on the foundations of high moral standards. Jeffrey Weeks has noticed that the three most acute phases of ruling-class concern with the morality of the masses - in the 1790s, 1830-40s, and 1880s-90s, coincided with periods of social and political disruption.¹⁰

It should be noted that the connection seems to have been predominantly one-directional: sexual anxiety functioned as a metaphor for displaced political and economic concerns, rather than vice-versa. Certainly it was easier for the state to exert control over the lives of sexually and socially oppressed domestic groups, than it was to take charge of political and economic affairs which usually involved more powerful (and often international) interests. In this respect, moral panics seem to have operated as pressure valves - providing scapegoats

upon which all sorts of frustrations could be vented.

During the Victorian period certain occupational groups were persistently singled out as targets of grave sexual concern - often becoming folk devils. By and large, fears centred on female transgressions of sexual norms since, as I will show, women had special moral obligations as guardians of the home and nurturers of the forthcoming generation. Of course, the much despised category of effeminate men (i.e. homosexuals, supporters of feminism, transvestites) also falls into this female category. Two of the better known 'deviant' types were the prostitute and the feminist activist which have both been the subject of several recent studies. Less familiar to modern researchers, but equally problematic were emancipated actresses and other entertainers whose lifestyles, like those of the prostitute and feminist transgressed virtually all variations of the feminine ideal. These are precisely the occupational types that Beardsley repeatedly depicted in the Yellow Book.

This brings me to the final point I want to make before turning to examine the ideals which defined these groups as deviant. This is simply to emphasize that there is a crucial difference between living members of these groups and verbal or visual representations of them. Representations (which are all that remain to the historian) are not value-free vessels that convey an objective 'truth'. Rather they are produced from a certain position in relatively autonomous media that operate according to their own codes and conventions. Different forms of cultural representation can cause images of the same occupational group to vary enormously.¹¹

Further complicating this notion of different functions is the fact that some categories of cultural representation seem to be more effective at producing social meanings than others. Until more research is done in this largely unexplored area, it is hard to know how to assess the relative weights of say, the highly prestigious category of oil painting, as opposed to the more widely reproduced but less respected category of newspaper illustration. Which is more ideologically effective? and how do these categories of visual imagery compare with representations in novels and plays?¹² Here I am unable to offer any definitive answers. However, recognizing the problem, I have attempted to provide as much information as possible about the source, status, and circulation of the representations I will be examining.

II The Feminine Ideal

The quintessentially domestic, feminine ideal continued to flourish well into the 1890s, as Lynn Linton's glowing description testified:

We live by our ideals....And one of these ideals in all Western countries is the home. Home means peace. It means, too, love. Perhaps the two are synonymous. In the normal division of labour the man has the outside work to do, from governing the country to tilling the soil; the woman takes the inside, managing the family and regulating society. The more highly civilized a community is the more completely differentiated are these two functions....

Part of this ideal of the home is the rest it gives the man when he returns to it after a hard day's work in the open - a hard day's struggle in the arena. Here his thoughts drift into a smoother channel, his affections have their full outlet, and to his wife and children he brings as much happiness as he receives. The

darker passions which the contests of life arouse are shut out; the sweeter influences of the family, the calmer interests of the intellect, the pleasures of art and society remain. We are speaking of the ideal, to which we all in some sort aspire;... (13)

This is the classic argument of the separate spheres: man as the head of the family goes out into the world to provide for his dependants; while woman as its heart stays at home to offer spiritual guidance and emotional support. Although God and nature have appointed each to a different set of tasks, it is the wisdom of the active man that rules the sentiments of the passive woman.¹⁴

Like all ideals, this one was temporally and socially specific. However much Linton may have asserted that everyone aspired to the blissful domestic status she described, it was more relevant for some than others. In a series of stimulating articles on the early formation of Victorian gender divisions, Catherine Hall has argued that the ideology of separate spheres with its subordination of women in the family was a crucial component of middle-class culture and self-identity. A shared set of assumptions about masculinity and femininity not only united disparate factions within the bourgeoisie, but also separated it from the aristocracy and gentry above and the working class below. Hall charts how this process of differentiation was connected to various early Victorian economic, political and social developments. These were, most notably: the separation of home and work; a growing reluctance to let women handle money and property; their exclusion from the recent enfranchisement of the class and from virtually all public activities; and finally a new emphasis on the moral and religious sanctity of the home.¹⁵

Women increasingly became defined in relational terms as wives and mothers who managed households and had babies. This social role was complemented by a feminine sexual ideology that was initially based on religious and moral premises, only gradually acquiring the trappings of scientific objectivity as doctors, biologists and later eugenicists developed theories of sexual difference. Female sexuality was constructed through a series of male oppositions. Men were strong, active and aggressive in satisfying their natural sexual desires. Women were weak, passive and only responsive to male initiatives, since they had no urges of their own beyond the maternal. Although male sexual drives were basically animalistic, in every other respect females were considered more primitive and closer to nature. Their simplicity theoretically endowed women with superior spiritual, moral, and intuitive qualities that made them responsible for 'civilizing' men. In spite of their spiritual advantages, women were physically and intellectually impoverished. Women's weaker constitutions which were governed by their highly unstable reproductive organs made them subordinate creatures that required physical protection.¹⁶ Likewise men's monopoly of intellect, reason and creativity particularly outfitted them for the task of protecting and providing.

This essential sexual duality justified the infamous double-standard that punished unchastity or infidelity in women while tolerating the same behaviour in men. It was the ability to meet the standard, rather than the standard itself that posed the problem. In

theory, the basic tenet of sexual respectability that 'the exclusive purpose of sexual indulgence was the propagation of the species in the holy state of matrimony' applied equally to both sexes.¹⁷ However, it was widely recognized that it was not only harder for men to control their powerful natural desires, but they were also subject to greater temptations in the public sphere outside the home. Because morally weaker males had to fight a much harder battle, periodic lapses into fornication and adultery were condoned as facts of life, provided that virtuous women were not corrupted. This acceptance of male transgressions required a separate category of immoral women to service their needs. Hence the polarity between the the sexless madonna/mother with her children in the privacy of the home and the promiscuous magdalene/prostitute soliciting on the public streets.

As Lucy Bland has observed, as well as redistributing qualities formerly found in all women, this polarity of virtuous/vice-ridden also drew a boundary between middle-and working-class behaviour:

The contrast had distinct class connotations: the bourgeois lady's (a)sexuality versus not simply the prostitute, but all working class women of the 'residuum', the unrespectable poor who like prostitutes, were seen as potential health hazards, harbouring germs of cholera, typhoid, VD, and representing a public danger through their prolific reckless breeding. By the late C19 [sic], the degree of a nation's 'civilization' was dominantly defined as by the status of women - as leisured and asexual, with patriarchal marital monogamy as the pinnacle, a favourable contrast to 'primitive' promiscuity.(18)

Middle class femininity became the norm for assessing other forms of aristocratic and working class behaviour. One area where this was highly

apparent was in attitudes towards the home.

For the aristocracy, the concept of the home did not occupy a particularly privileged position. Certainly the ancestral seat was an undeniably important symbol of wealth and social position, but it reflected the hereditary status of the family more than the character of its occupants. In fact, the country house served several purposes in addition to housing its family. These included being a commercial and administrative centre, as well as providing a venue for Society entertainment. Unlike the middle class, the aristocracy did not draw rigid distinctions between their public and private lives. Furthermore, the home was not somewhere the upper-class male spent as much time compared to his middle-class counterpart:

As far as the man from the new industrial and commercial class was concerned, his work routine kept him at home alongside his wife in the evenings and on week-ends. In contrast to the males of the landed gentry who devoted considerable spare time to vigorous physical sports such as riding, shooting, drinking, whoring and soldiering, he spent his regular hours at home maintaining the decorum of the household.(19)

It was their glaringly public life of leisure with its conspicuous absence of quiet domesticity that fostered a reputation of decadence, over-indulgence, and corruption. For the aristocracy and very wealthy members of Society, time was divided between Court, visiting, foreign travel, and possibly various homes.

For the suburban middle class, however, home became invested with

an unprecedented significance. It was something that required careful budgeting and planning in order to present the best possible view of its inhabitants to the outside world. Separate from man's work in the city, it provided a haven or moral refuge. As the guardians of the sanctuary, women were protected from contaminating contact with the external world of business and politics. Although they managed servants, children and the daily operation of the household, such labour in the private sphere was largely unrecognized and totally unpaid. Physical labour of any form was degrading. Their importance was rather as decorative symbols of the privacy and leisure that their husbands/fathers and servants provided.²⁰

Lacking servants and living close to their places of work, even the most respectable (i.e. closest to middle-class) strata of the working class could not achieve such a complete separation of sexual spheres. Women often worked outside the home, in addition to performing the manual drudgery of housework. Like those of the aristocracy, working class lives were conspicuously public - not at Court or in Society, but rather at work or in the streets. However, the lives of such outsiders were not necessarily regarded as deviant per se. It was possible to belong to Society or the world of manual labour and still attain a diluted form of the domestic ideal. In fact representations of virtuous royalty or honest working families did much to foster social cohesion.²¹ Nevertheless, the fundamental differences of these groups was always potentially subversive.

It should immediately be stressed that this short summary of prevailing attitudes was not universally applicable, unchanging, or uncontested. Such definitions and behavioural norms were the sites of continuous struggle. I have simply mapped out some of the dominant assumptions against which the images in this sections were assessed as 'deviant'. The specific operation of these norms in the mid-1890s will become more apparent in the ensuing discussion of late Victorian feminism.

III New Women and Late Victorian Feminism

Feminism is by no means a self-explanatory concept. Although generally speaking, it refers to the theory and practice of women obtaining equality with men in terms of sexual, social, economic, and political rights, the specific tactics and objectives of the women's movement have varied widely.²² Like any other form of social labelling, it has been viewed positively by its adherents and negatively by its opponents. The many strands of feminist activity and their complex interrelation are no easier to chart in nineteenth century England than at any other point. Consequently, the following analysis does not attempt a comprehensive overview of all areas of activity but is restricted to inserting the work of New Women writers and actresses into the mainstream of late Victorian feminism.

The term New Woman is equally problematic. Coined during the 1890s, it was used to describe not only a wide range of feminists but also

a number of uncommitted and anti-feminist women who displayed such modern signs as knickers, smoking, or bicycling to name a few. In its broadest application, New Women referred to any female or aspect of her behaviour that strayed from the previously discussed domestic ideal. While on the one hand, departures from the ideal were potentially disruptive, especially if they were part of a conscious feminist strategy; on the other hand, they could also be accommodated as superficial reflections of changing historical circumstances that did not alter the basis of women's sexual subordination. Hence the symbol of the unconventional New Woman was a prime site of struggle.

In retrospect, probably the best known area of feminist activity in the 1890s concerned the issue of female suffrage. In spite of the steadily increasing membership of various suffrage societies, the campaign had experienced a number of depressing set-backs, including the failure of Gladstone's Liberal administration to include a woman's suffrage clause in the Reform Bill of 1884, and the similar defeats of suffrage bills in 1885 and 1892. The death in 1887 of Lydia Becker, a leading activist and editor of the Women's Suffrage Journal, also slowed down momentum. In 1889, a serious shadow was cast over the movement by the emergence of a formally organized anti-suffragist group which sent a protest to the editor of the Nineteenth Century signed by such leading figures as Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Mrs. Creighton, and Mrs. Sidney Webb.²³ Further compounding the problem was the fact that by the mid-1890s, the national press had become rather bored with the whole issue. Consequently, despite the fact that organizers like Millicent Garrett Fawcett were addressing

large meetings several times a week, it was increasingly difficult for such organizations as the Women's Liberal Federation to present their views to the general public.²⁴

One of the very few cartoons dealing with the suffrage issue in 'Jottings of the Week' from the Pall Mall Budget of 1894 (fig.1) aptly satirized the situation of the Women's Liberal Federation passing endless 'hot water' resolutions at ladies' tea parties that were never enacted. Of course the characterization of the masculine suffragist with her plain features, severe hair-style, glasses, and huge hands inferred that the movement's supporters conspicuously lacked the usual feminine charms.²⁵ What is possibly a butler's suit suggests such women were declassed as well as unsexed. Finally the woman's Phrygian cap invokes the spectre of the French revolution and its attendant evils. All in all this undignified figure makes a mockery of the feminist claim that the participation of women would elevate the tone of politics.

During the 1880s and 1890s more headway was made securing rights for married women and opening up the area of higher education. With respect to the former, after substantial feminist lobbying, the Married Women's Property Act was passed in 1881.²⁶ Three years later the Matrimonial Causes Act eliminated the penalty of imprisonment for refusing to comply with a decree for the restoration of conjugal rights. In 1886 married women secured the right to initiate legal proceedings for maintenance before being sent to the workhouse if they had no other means of support, and finally in a court case of 1891 it was ruled that habeas

corpus applied to females which meant women were legally recognized as persons and entitled to the freedom of movement.²⁷

Turning to the area of higher education, women's progress was also fairly steady. Here prominent landmarks included establishing women's rights to study medicine, and setting up women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge in the late 1870s, although female students were not awarded degrees. In 1880 the University of London voted to grant women full membership which was rapidly followed by the other provincial universities excluding Oxford and Cambridge. During the 1880s and 1890s significant numbers of women won academic distinctions in traditional male areas. Achievements such as Agneta Ramsay's First in the Cambridge Classical Tripos in 1887 and Philippa Fawcett's First in the Mathematical Tripos of 1890 were widely reported in the press.²⁸

Before turning to look at some other major areas of feminist activity in the 1890s, I would like to emphasize that the significant inroads in the areas of women's legal autonomy and education seem to have made these especially sensitive issues. In fact, during 1894-1895 press cartoons and verbal parodies of intellectual women and solitary women independently occupying themselves without men or chaperones seem far more numerous than those satirizing women's employment and politics. As I will show these are also the types of representations Beardsley mainly produced in the Yellow Book. Evidently male illustrators (or their editors) were fairly perceptive - attacking women on the very grounds where their organization had been most successful.

Looking at feminist involvement with employment, one finds it was seriously complicated by the problems of class and prevailing notions of sexual difference. Certainly employment opportunities for women were rapidly expanding in the late 1880s and early 1890s, especially in the new clerical, retail, and civil service sectors, as well as in the more traditional female areas of nursing and education. More women, even from middle-class backgrounds, were working than ever before.²⁹ Nearly all feminists hailed these developments enthusiastically and during the nineties several women's employment studies were undertaken. Immediately one is struck by the tone of these investigations which suggest that many writers were dealing with a phenomenon which did not concern them directly.³⁰

Although the majority of married late Victorian feminists worked arduously, it was more often in volunteer capacities than as self-supporting wage-earners. In some senses they were perpetuating the notion that philanthropic activity (albeit for feminist causes) was more suitable for upper-middle-class ladies than paid work. Undeniably it could be argued that they had few options considering the scarcity of professions which admitted married women, and the continuing difficulties involved in acquiring the appropriate training. Yet material obstacles notwithstanding, it was probably the ideological ones that were more formidable. With very few exceptions, it was unmarried middle-class women who entered paid employment. Their married sisters continued to be regarded as wives and mothers above all else. Motherhood was still the

natural ideal, although feminists emphasized that those who did not marry also had useful social roles and should be able to participate in public life. Here the feminists turned the old notion of sexual differences to new account, by arguing that women's moral superiority was precisely what was needed in politics, as Millicent Garrett Fawcett made clear:

We do not want women to be bad imitations of men; we neither deny or minimize the differences between men and women. The claim of women to representation depends to a large extent on those differences. Women bring something to the service of the state different from that which can be brought by men.(31)

Similarly, improving female educational standards would make women better wives and mothers, in addition to helping those who did not enter family life to provide for themselves.

Full time employment for married women was another matter. Obviously it interfered with their domestic duties. Although many feminists recognized that substantial numbers of working-class females had to work to supplement the family income, the ideal resolution of this conflict was usually seen in terms of an adequate family wage. Hence Lady Dilke's support of male trade unionism was fairly typical:

...when these [women workers] marry there arise ties which conflict, and as far as one can see, will always conflict, with the efficiency and regularity of the labour of married women....[accordingly she praised the goals of trade unionism] which, in so far as it is concerned with the organization of women's work, has for its ultimate object the restoration of as many as possible to their post of honour as queens of the hearth.(32)

However much feminists managed to improve the working conditions of single women, their overall position on employment was not particularly

effective. The fundamental division between single and married women ultimately reinforced the prevailing view that paid female labour was an exception to the male norm. Effectively all women were economically penalized - married women forfeited their own earning power, while single women faced stiff competition and substandard pay. In essence, Lee Holcombe's assessment of the relationship between feminism and the expansion of female employment seems depressingly accurate:

...the growth in numbers of middle-class working women was a natural result of the general development of the country's economy, was the answer to the changing needs of an increasingly industrialized society. In short, the Victorian women's movement witnessed but did not cause the widening avenues of employment for middle-class women.(33)

By adopting a 'separate spheres' ideology (albeit in a modified form), feminist organizations were able to assume a respectable reformist position within the middle-class establishment. Their acceptance of a fundamentally different feminine nature removed women from direct competition with men. Feminist campaigns were primarily directed towards securing equality in the public sphere through legal and cons^titutional measures. Emphasis was placed on the removal of restrictions which kept women in a state of dependence rather than affirmative action through direct assistance. While the moves towards equal legal and political rights certainly provided openings for a few exceptional women, they did not eliminate the vast majority's existing economic and sexual subordination especially in the private domains of business and the family. In effect, these basic handicaps in areas largely beyond the government's jurisdiction, meant that few women could take full advantage of their new rights.³⁴

The main exception to the campaigns just outlined was the social purity movement of the 1880s and 1890s which directly tackled the issue of sexuality by attempting to regulate sexual behaviour in both the public and private spheres.³⁵ The movement's leading agency was the National Vigilance Association, formed in 1885 on the wave of moral indignation surrounding W. T. Stead's infamous series of articles on child prostitution entitled 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' published in the Pall Mall Gazette and the resulting passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The Act was designed to eliminate the sexual abuse of children by raising the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen. increasing the police's powers of surveillance, and making indecent acts between consenting male adults a criminal offense. The clause criminalizing male homosexual activity was part of a general anti-aristocratic bias which permeated the whole bill. Such attitudes had been fostered by Stead's prurient accounts of diseased old rakes from the upper classes purchasing under-age virgins.³⁶

The massive outburst of public feeling which surrounded Stead's articles manifested itself in well-attended protest meetings throughout the country and a massive demonstration in Hyde Park including working-class contingents from the East End, trade union leaders and representations from women's suffrage societies. It was on the eve of the Hyde Park demonstration that various members from all of these groups formed the National Vigilance Association with the general purpose of protecting young girls. Although the organization had substantial

feminist backing from Josephine Butler and many members of the Ladies National Association to moderate suffragists like Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Elizabeth Blackwell, it also encompassed many other factions including Christian fundamentalists, members of the Salvation Army and other philanthropic organizations. In other words, it was a very mixed alliance.

There are several reasons why it is worth pausing to explore the activities of this organization. First of all, despite growing feminist disenchantment, the N.V.A. was one of the main vehicles through which feminist views on sexuality were disseminated during the period. As we shall see, the views of New Women writers and actresses were largely formulated in opposition to the dominant notions of social purity. Second, as the largest and most active moral lobby, the N.V.A. was responsible for initiating many legal proceedings against what it considered obscene literature, entertainment, and advertising. These court cases defined the outer limits of social respectability - establishing what could or could not be published, produced and exhibited. Many of these test cases such as the prosecution of Zola's publisher in 1889 and later Pick-Me-Up, a 'soft porn' illustrated magazine, in 1894 set literary and visual guidelines that directly affected writers and illustrators working on ventures like the Yellow Book.³⁷

Similarly the pressure the N.V.A. applied to the London County Council which licenced theatres and music-halls set moral precedents that could not be ignored. In 1890, the management of the Royal Aquarium was

forced to withdraw a poster advertising Zaeo, a female acrobat (fig.91) when threatened with losing their licence. Such an official example of immorality is interesting to compare with Beardsley's also allegedly indecent Avenue Theatre poster of 1894. Finally the crusade of Mrs. Ormiston Chant, a prominent member of the N.V.A., to close the promenade of the Empire Theatre music-hall in October, 1894 cannot be overlooked. Claiming it was a notorious haunt of prostitutes, Mrs. Chant's campaign initiated a wave of moral panic in the city which affected the ways viewers interpreted Beardsley's illustrations of prostitutes in the Yellow Book. All of these individual cases will be considered in more detail in connection with specific images in subsequent sections.

For the moment, I want to return to the first item of feminism's relationship with the N.V.A. It is a contentious issue which has been much debated by recent historians of the movement. Certainly it is safe to say that the N.V.A. initially incorporated much of the left-over energy and organization of the Ladies National Association that had fought the Contagious Diseases Acts during the sixties and seventies until their repeal in 1886. In addition to Josephine Butler, the repealers' leading spokeswoman, ten branch secretaries of the L.N.A. joined the N.V.A.³⁸ However, as early as 1891, many former L.N.A. members (including Butler) were increasingly disturbed by what they considered the coercive tactics of the N.V.A. Judith Walkowitz's summary of the contradictory tendencies of the two organizations explains their disillusionment:

Begun as a libertarian struggle against the state

sanction of male vice, the repeal campaign helped to spawn a hydra-headed assault on nonmarital, nonreproductive sexuality. The struggle against state regulation evolved into a movement that used the instruments of the state for repressive purposes.(39)

Yet for many feminists, this was a price they were willing to pay in order to acquire a single standard of sexual morality. The old Evangelical belief in chastity for all (aside from procreation in marriage) was newly resurrected. However, this should not be interpreted simply as sexual repression or moral panic. While these may have been the basis of male motives, the situation was different for women who had far less power to control their lives. Sheila Jeffreys has argued that in one respect the achievement of a single moral standard was a very real victory for social purity feminists since the notion of a naturally uncontrollable male sexuality was challenged by large numbers of men pledging themselves to purity.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the ideology of separate spheres was not totally dismantled. Although men were made more responsible for their actions, they were to protect weaker women and children. This stereotype of female victimization was highly problematic. On the one hand it encouraged many men to support short term campaigns against the sexual abuse of women and children; but on the other it perpetuated the existing imbalance of sexual power that created the problem in the first place. State intervention was and is a difficult trade-off that feminists still have to resolve. Women do need to be protected against males abuses, but they must have the power to protect themselves. How can legislation be effectively implemented by state agencies over which women have little control (i.e. courts, police)?

Furthermore should feminists ally themselves - even if only temporarily, with sectors of the establishment such as Christian fundamentalists who were and are totally opposed to the basic tenet of female equality?⁴¹

Another smaller school of late Victorian feminists provided a different set of answers that seems well worth exploring. This was a combination of sexual radicals including figures such as Karl Pearson, Olive Schreiner, Grant Allen, and a number of New Women novelists.⁴² Delineating their position is more difficult since their areas of concern were wider and their organization more nebulous. Nevertheless both the general public and the moderate feminists just discussed perceived them as a distinctly identifiable group - one with which Beardsley and his illustrations became increasingly identified.

Perhaps the most marked characteristics of this group were its emphasis on individual liberties (as opposed to duties) and its complete opposition to the state regulation of sexual behaviour. Largely involved with literature and drama, members of the school were frequently subjected to censorship and prosecution for indecency. The problem centred on their explicit discussion of sexual matters in ways that upset prevailing norms - especially their criticisms of marriage, the ideology of separate spheres, and the essential nature of femininity. Instead of respectably conforming in these areas, as the majority of feminists did, these activists usually made the most of their outcast status. Their carefully cultivated pose as outsiders was part of an avant-garde strategy of

attracting public attention, marketing cultural commodities and disseminating ideas.

Their most conspicuous success was literary - primarily in the form of short critical essays, stories, and novels. Such radical new ideas severely strained the traditional vehicles of the staid monthly review and the three-volume novel for circulating libraries which catered to broad cross-sections of the middle class. Enterprising new publishers catered to the growth of such special interests by launching new periodicals and series of novels. In fact, the publishers John Lane and T. Fisher Unwin provided one of the main organizational links for this group of young writers.⁴³ Also important was a network of progressive social organizations such as the largely feminist Pioneer Club which frequently featured lectures on 'advanced' topics.⁴⁴

An influential early formulation of these new ideas appeared in two essays entitled 'The Woman's Question' (1885) and 'Socialism and Sex' (1887) by Karl Pearson, a socialist university lecturer. Pearson flatly rejected the idea that women's sphere was primarily domestic. Advocating the complete emancipation of women, he argued that the existing family and state structures needed totally overhauling. A single standard of sexual morality was to prevail, although here Pearson was more flexible than the social purity feminists, suggesting that it could either take the form of reducing men's sexual freedoms, or extending them to women. Essentially he believed in state supported maintenance for women with children which would free them to form sexual relationships of their own choosing that

could be terminated if and when the partners desired. While he avoided prescribing a monogamous ideal, like many socialists of the period, he felt it would probably predominate.⁴⁵ During the 1880s, various feminists from Eleanor Marx to Olive Schreiner, who were familiar with Pearson's work, also espoused similar types of 'free unions' in their own lives and writings.⁴⁶ Schreiner's African Farm (1883) in which the heroine, Lyndall, scornfully rejects the conventional marriage tie that sanctions sexual relationships is one of the earliest examples of an extremely popular theme.

Lyndall's ultimately tragic quest for self-fulfilment continued to preoccupy feminist writers and their male sympathizers during the 1890s. One of the most intensely debated essays on the subject was Grant Allen's 'The New Hedonism' which appeared in a March 1894 issue of the Fortnightly Review. Its keynote was captured by the slogan 'self-development is better than self-sacrifice'.⁴⁷ Grant Allen concentrated on attacking the conventional values of Christian asceticism which he identified with writers of the the Carlyle variety who relegated sensual gratification to the afterlife. Allen defended contemporary fiction since he claimed erotic impulses were responsible for

The sense of beauty, the sense of duty; parental responsibility, paternal and maternal love, domestic affection; song, dance, and decoration; the entire higher life in its primitive manifestations; pathos and fidelity; in one word, the soul... - all rise direct from the despised "lower" pleasures.(48)

Like Pearson, Allen favoured the principle of free-unions that would tend to be monogamous.⁴⁹

Allen had already realized in an earlier essay 'Plain Words on the Woman Question' that his views not only upset the Christian establishment, but also angered a substantial number of feminists. He mainly addressed himself to the criticisms of social purity, ignoring critiques from more radical feminists. Although he repeatedly asserted his support for the woman's movement, he felt they were wrong to champion the cause of the unmarried spinster at the expense of the wife and mother. Heavily influenced by eugenics, Allen maintained that in a healthy society every woman would have to bear at least two children to maintain efficient population levels. Fully supported by the state and free to form their own sexual unions, motherhood nevertheless remained women's primary obligation.

In many ways, this revamped eugenic motherhood which also permeated the writings of other New Women novelists provided fresh ammunition for defending the ideology of separate spheres.⁵⁰ Hence Allen's work was more palatable to establishment critics than the more radical positions of such writers as Mona Caird, Sarah Grand and George Egerton. Before briefly reviewing their positions, I should mention I have selected these three women because they seem to have generated the most anxiety and criticism in mainstream circles. They were definitely regarded as belonging to the most dangerous lunatic fringe of New Women writers.

Mona Caird basically supported Allen's criticisms of puritanical respectability, also believing that it placed too much emphasis on sexual

restraint.⁵¹ However, she found the concept of obligatory maternity equally repugnant. Above all, she emphasized that motherhood must be entirely optional - women having the right to choose whether and when they would undertake the physical strains of having children. In Caird's view, most women were already ridiculously overburdened by inequalities that denied them effective control of their lives. A mandatory eugenic mission simply added to women's problems. In an article entitled 'The Morality of Marriage', she furiously rejected the notion that present generations of women had to be sacrificed for the future of the race:

One-half of the race is to be rescued at the expense of the other! A highly moral and scientific solution of the difficulty. Highly moral and scientific men have advocated this singular method of averting the danger of race degeneration, so we must conclude that the proposal shares the qualities of its authors. Women, who are already crippled in body and mind by excessive performance of the duties of maternity, are to plunge yet further in the same disastrous direction - to cut off all chance of respite and relief, all hope of the over-taxed system righting itself by a more general distribution of energy. The longing and the effort - so striking among the present generation - for a less one-sided, more healthily-balanced life must be sternly checked....At this, however, there are murmurs; a rebellion is brewing.(52)

According to Caird, the problem of women's subordination could not be solved by merely attaining equal opportunities in the 'public' sphere. These were virtually useless without a corresponding reduction of women's familial obligations:

To go on having children year after year, supervising them and the home while doing other work outside, would indeed have disastrous consequences for women and for the race, but who would wish to see them doing anything so insane? Such a domestic treadmill is stupid and brutal enough without the addition of the mental toil. It is the treadmill that must be modified.(53)

Sarah Grand also took up the same argument eloquently asserting that woman's 'manifold nature' had become hopelessly distorted by a controlling male gaze that assessed her solely in terms of her sexual appeal.⁵⁴

While Mona Caird and Sarah Grand effectively challenged the ideology of separate spheres with its emphasis on domesticity and motherhood for women, George Egerton (the pen-name of Mary Chavelita Dunne) was more interested in exploring women's sensual experiences. In contrast to Caird and Grand, Egerton did not view herself as a feminist propagandist. During the 1890s her writing was confined to collections of short stories, and a few translations from Norwegian writers. All of them revolved around the heroine's inner experience of her own sexuality. Even though many of her female characters appeared outwardly conventional, Egerton recorded their hidden passions, desires and fantasies.

A typical case in point is provided by an Irish country wife from a story in Keynotes who sitting by a stream imagines herself performing a wild dance before 'hundreds of faces' on an Arabian open-air stage:

She can see herself with parted lips and panting, rounded breasts, and a dancing devil in each glowing eye, sway voluptuously to the wild music that rises, now slow, now fast, now deliriously wild, seductive, intoxicating, with a human note of passion in its strain.(55)

After fantasizing, the woman laughs to herself imagining how many other women have experienced similar things without men being aware of their complex natures. It was this assertion of concealed and inaccessible female sexuality that disconcertingly belied the dominant notion of respectable asexual femininity.⁵⁶ In 1894 an interviewer of Egerton

recorded:

...when you tell her she has only described an uncommon type of woman, she laughs again, and quotes extracts from letters she has received since the appearance of "Keynotes" from seemingly narrow women, leading conventional lives, asking her to write more, because they are glad to know another woman feels as they do.(57)

With few exceptions, male 'philistines' found such representations of sexually knowledgeable and assertive women extremely threatening. Typical retaliatory tactics consisted of portraying such women being ultimately punished by male rejection. Punch, for instance, carefully singled out Egerton's passage cited above, working it into a caricature entitled 'She-Notes' (fig. 2). The ending of Egerton's original story 'A Crossed Line' where the woman sends away her lover is rewritten to have her lover abandon her in favour of her unemancipated maid.

The period from 1893 to 1895 was definitely the high-water mark of New Women's fiction. In addition to the main works of Caird, Grand and Egerton, numerous other sensational novels were published including: Iota's Yellow Aster (1893) dealing with frigidity; Emma Brooke's The Superfluous Woman (1894) outlining the sexual and social constraints of Society life; and Menie Muriel Dowie's Gallia (1895) tracing the inaginary life of a totally emancipated woman. Other works, too numerous to discuss here brought the previously marginalized problems of prostitution, rape, venereal disease, contraception, adultery and divorce under increasing scrutiny.⁵⁸ Indeed, it was this inordinate emphasis on sexual matters that unified the school in the eyes of most literary critics. A series of articles in the Westminster Budget signed by a

self-proclaimed 'Philistine' (J.A. Sterry) characterized such writing as a form of sex-mania. Condemning Egerton's Discords as a typical example, the Philistine complained:

There are six short stories and, with one exception, they harp on sex problems, enter into details about sex, dissect it, probe it, analyze it, perorate about it. They tell "the Truth" about the world and the truth is that marriage consists of mating innocent girls to vicious men with the connivance of grasping snobbish parents, that man regards woman as his prey and slave, that he seduces her and blackmails her, that what is called morality is the cause of all immorality, that women are everywhere groaning under this tyranny, straining to break their bonds, assert their ego, obtain their liberty. Happily the world consists still in large part of Philistines to whom this seems an absurd travesty.(59)

A number of literary reviewers picked up the theme contributing a spate of articles variously titled 'Sex in Modern Literature', 'The Fiction of Sexuality', and 'Sex in Fiction' to name a few.⁶⁰

The sex problem, however, was strictly female as W. T. Stead pointed out:

The Modern Woman novel is not merely a novel written by a woman, or a novel written about women, but it is a novel written by a woman about women from the standpoint of Woman.(61)

By creating a special subsection of female fiction judged by different standards women writers were effectively trapped in a ghetto - the operative emphasis being placed on their sex rather than their literary abilities. Significantly sex-mania was described almost exclusively in feminine terms as hysterical, overly emotional, and intellectually weak. Hence female protests against the sexual status-quo comfortably confirmed the notion of feminine irrationality. This device could also be turned

against the few male supporters of feminism who were derogatorily classified as effeminate.

More worrying than the small numbers of sexually deranged creatures who produced this fiction was the vast majority of normal, unemancipated women who might be corrupted by its pernicious effects. Protecting the innocent became a major preoccupation. Arthur Rackham's cover for the Philistine's protest against sex-mania (fig. 3) reveals the literally hair-raising impact the New Fiction supposedly had on the average young woman. Anti-feminist critics plainly perceived that the women novelists' tactics of consciousness-raising were exceedingly dangerous, as Hugh Stutfield observed:

The matter rests largely in the hands of women. I do not wish to say anything unfair, but I think it cannot be denied that women are chiefly responsible for the "booming" of books that are "close to life" - life, that is to say as viewed through sex-maniacal glasses. They are greater novel readers than men, to begin with, and their curiosity is piqued by the subjects dealt with in the new fiction and drama, and not a few of them regard the authors as champions of their rights.(62)

He further suggested that if women were unable to control themselves by refusing to read works of this 'physiologico-pornographic' school, the police and Licensor of Plays would have to put an end to it by force.

Hence we return full circle to the differences between social purity feminists and those associated with the New Fiction and Drama.⁶³ The former were willing to limit their sexual options to securing the best possible deal for women without forfeiting their respectability and male protection; while the latter were prepared to

abandon the semblance of respectability in search of new sexual relationships. From the vantage point of the twentieth century, both strategies had their strengths and weaknesses. Mainstream feminists were undoubtedly more effectively organized and consequently secured many needed reforms. In contrast, less practical New Women novelists were able to generate a more comprehensive critique of patriarchal ideology, but very little else in concrete terms. It is interesting that these two strands of feminism appear to have been based on different occupational groups within the middle class. Mainstream feminists seem to have come largely from solid professional backgrounds (e.g. medicine, politics, law and education) as opposed to the more diverse origins of writers and actresses. In general mainstream feminists seem to have access to substantial family incomes whereas writers and actresses depended on their careers as a means of supporting themselves. The markedly freer life-style of the latter (which occasionally bordered on the 'Bohemian'), must have reinforced these differences.⁶⁴

There is considerable evidence suggesting relations between the two groups were not particularly sympathetic. In the Contemporary Review, Millicent Garrett Fawcett launched a lengthy assault on Grant Allen's novel, The Woman Who Did, condemning its social and sexual doctrines. While part of her wrath was directed towards his heroine, Herminia Barton, who was a rather weak and inconsistent creature, what really angered Fawcett was Allen's attack on marriage. She hastened to assure readers that Allen's views were not shared by the main supporters of women's enfranchisement, even if Allen claimed he backed their cause:

He [Grant Allen] is not a friend [to women suffragists] but an enemy, and it is as an enemy that he endeavours to link together the claim of women to citizenship and social and industrial independence, with attacks upon marriage and the family. The whole of the social revolution sketched in "The Woman Who Did" would amount in its practical result to libertinage, not to liberty; it would mean the immeasurable degradation of women;...(65)

Fawcett's review was widely cited with approval in such cautiously feminist books as Elizabeth Chapman's Marriage Questions in Modern Fiction. Recognizing the need for minor reforms in the marriage laws, Chapman was equally horrified by Caird's heroine, Hadria, in The Daughters of Danaus who rebelled against domesticity and the family, becoming so warped that she wanted to avoid motherhood altogether.⁶⁶ Again like Fawcett, Chapman claimed that Hadria (and by implication Caird) was a frondeuse who threatened the fabric of society. In the same vein Josephine Butler reportedly disliked Sarah Grand's best seller of 1893, The Heavenly Twins which she claimed displayed too low an opinion of men.⁶⁷ Evidently many members of the women's movement shared Mrs. A. H. Bright's position that 'those who hold the views popularly attributed to the New Woman are the most dangerous allies'.⁶⁸ Such self-indulgent, radical ideas could only jeopardize the hard-won credibility of the suffragists.

Not surprisingly there is less evidence indicating that feminist novelists and actresses feared association with the moderate sector of the women's movement. Obviously they had much less to loose in the way of respectability. Nevertheless, there are signs that the N.V.A.'s vigorous crusades to cleanse public morality were unwelcome in radical quarters.

Indeed, we have already seen Grant Allen's objections to social purity. Similarly Mrs. Grundy, a stock figure of fun in many cartoons from the socialist magazine To-Day, frequently resembled the attitudes and actions of social purity campaigners.⁶⁹

Greatly complicating matters was the fact that the term New Woman could be applied to both groups. This was in the broadest sense of stigmatizing all feminists as deviants.⁷⁰ Thus a social purity feminist protesting against allegedly indecent music-hall entertainment and a female writer explicitly describing women's sexual fantasies were both labelled New Women in newspaper reports of 1894.⁷¹ Although a number of overlapping and generally negative characteristics were applied to all New Women (e.g. masculinity, ugliness, an over-developed intellect) two distinctly different stereotypical trends can be discerned in both verbal and visual accounts.⁷²

The first was the undersexed spinster of the N.V.A. variety who was nearly always portrayed as a prowling prude. A typical example appears in 'A Perplexed Councillor' (fig. 4) published in the Sketch during October, 1894 at the height of the N.V.A. protests over prostitution at the Empire Theatre. Skinny, dowdily attired with beady eyes and inquisitive features, the woman was definitely unappealing compared with her pretty, fashionably dressed demimondaine counterpart. The L.C.C. councillor who naturally turns towards the soft charms of the Empire promenader is forcibly reminded of Mrs. Grundy's objections. Every aspect of her person is sharp, angular and exceedingly uncomfortable.

The second category of New Woman was the typically oversexed writer. Du Maurier's cartoon entitled 'The Latest Literary Success' (fig. 5) from Punch provides a classic example. Subtitled 'The Woman Who Wanted to', the reference to Allen's book immediately establishes the figure as a sex-manical female novelist. Her unattractive, heavily sensual features signify an overcharged sexuality that has little prospect of fulfilment - hence the outpouring of lurid literary details. Her frilly dress, side-long glance, coquettish smile and position in front of her toilet table all connote artifice, corruption, and wished-for promiscuity. It should be noted that the ridiculing of 'deviant' minorities was one of Du Maurier's specialities. His attacks on Decadents and New Women during the 1890s followed his criticism of the Aesthetic movement during the 1880s. His staunch defence of established values is indicative of Punch's basic conservatism during this period.⁷³

IV Visual Stereotypes of New Women

At this point I would like to quickly survey some of the more prominent visual hallmarks of the New Woman as she was represented in popular magazine illustration during 1894-1895. A large part of women's newness at the turn of the century revolved around their increasing social and geographic mobility. Middle-class women became more active physically venturing beyond the confines of the domestic sphere. Starting with lawn tennis in the 1880s and expanding into such sports as cricket, rowing, and rounders, females penetrated a number of formerly all male activities.

Above all, bicycling, one of the most popular bourgeois crazes of the mid-nineties became a symbol and reality of growing female independence. Initially bicycling women challenged all kinds of assumptions about the passive nature of femininity. Their new freedom of movement enabled many to dispense with chaperones and adopt less restrictive clothing. The extensive debate on the bicycle's merits, especially for women, fostered new magazines, in addition to filling the columns of existing newspapers and journals.⁷⁴

By the middle of the decade, although controversies about the appropriate level of female activity persisted, the notion of sporting women was acceptable enough to be used in mass advertising.⁷⁵ The company that manufactured Elliman's Universal Embrocation, a linament for aching muscles, mounted a series of advertisements illustrating 'women playing golf, cricket and bicycling (figs.6-7). While the novelty of women engaged in these pursuits was designed to attract attention, the pleasingly portrayed women were intended to inspire emulation rather than censure. However, the bicycle as a symbol of mobility and change also continued to be associated with a more threatening type of female as Punch's 'A Valentyne' (fig. 8) and Woman's 'The Topsy Turvydom of the Sexes' (fig. 9) demonstrate. Here the exaggeratedly masculine attire of the female bicyclists suggest they intend to usurp male prerogatives. In the poem accompanying the Punch picture, the bicycling woman is held responsible for the death of chivalry, and a plea is made for her to return to her old maidenly ways.

The demand for independence was a recurring theme in many New Women's cartoons. The latchkey symbolizing women's privilege of coming and going at will was an item sought by a younger generation of girls that was educated at the newly formed women's colleges.⁷⁶ The conflict between the young girls' demands and the opposition of their more traditional mothers was widely interpreted as a generational crisis - effectively displacing the issue of male oppression. In a series of highly publicized articles on the 'Revolting Daughters', mothers and their unmarried girls aired their grievances.⁷⁷ The latter basically wanted the same freedoms their brothers possessed as Arthur Rackham's cartoon 'Our Daughters on Strike' in the Westminster Budget (fig. 10) reveals. Both the respectable British matrons and their daughters seem ridiculously out of place at this mass demonstration. The notion that women's issues are trivial compared to men's serious political business is subtly reinforced by the paternalism of the title and the fact that the young girls are a pretty spectacle rather than a serious threat.⁷⁸

Another way of trivializing the New Woman was displaying her as a fashionable upper-middle-class fad. This was the point of Harrison's 'The Refined Lady and Gentleman Guest Hire Association' published in the Pall Mall Budget (fig. 11). Along with their standard range of diplomats, drama critics, and assorted aristocratic ladies, this Mayfair service specially featured the New Woman guest who conspicuously smoked, discussed New Fiction and racing tips, and of course carried a latchkey. The fact that she is advertised as creating a great stir in suburban circles implies she was a middle-class phenomenon of little interest for the

aristocratic or working classes. Significantly, in the second section, we will see how critics also discussed the Yellow Book as a sensation in the same suburban circles.

As both the previous two cartoons have shown, advanced females were generally depicted as larger than life creatures who excelled in masculine pursuits. This unnatural sense of theatricality pervades much New Woman imagery. 'Pheasant Shooting' from the Sketch (fig. 12) provides a typical example where the New Woman not only dwarfs the puny old man but is also a significantly better shot. In this instance, the New Woman is not presented as an ugly masculine type but rather as the Society beauty whose superficial mind is filled with inappropriate new ideas. Although rarer in visual representations, this image of the attractive, but rather naive Society female 'toying' with notions of emancipation was a recurring literary theme.

More often in cartoons and caricatures, the New Woman's masculinity manifested itself in her appearance - physical abnormalities reinforcing deviant behaviour. Contrasts between the conventionally pretty normal woman and her emancipated ugly sister were common. Du Maurier's 'Passionate Literary Types' from Punch (fig. 13) implies that the unhappy spinster novelist of the New School was too physically repellent to have lovely Mrs. Blyth's choice of marriage. Her asserted preference of remaining single is exposed as false bravado. Similarly Phil May's 'The Smoking Room of a Ladies Club' (fig. 14) also contrasts the New Woman who has graduated to smoking cigars with two young feminine members who as

yet cannot manage cigarettes. The New Woman's severe hair-style, masculine attire, glasses, aggressive stance, and the weight of her black garments are played off against the soft flowing hair, light coloured, frilly dresses and wilting poses of the club's new initiates. The cartoon infers that these womanly members face the dilemma of meeting the New Woman's standard, or preserving their femininity by renouncing their memberships. Again the point is reiterated in 'Easter Man-oeuvres' of the Pall Mall Budget (fig. 15). Here a well-dressed womanly woman remarks to her male companion 'There that's a New Woman'; referring to a dowdy, bespectacled creature in bloomers and gaiters bicycling up the path towards the couple. Like her advanced colleagues, she is presented as an isolated object of pity.

Certainly this was a favourite line of anti-feminist attack. In a letter to the editor of Vanity Fair entitled 'The Unbeautiful New Woman', one hostile opponent of women's rights posed the question underlying all of the above cartoons:

Now the question naturally arises, would these same women be advanced if they were possessed of that divine prerogative of their sex - beauty? If they were round and rosy and pretty? It is all very well to talk about the commanding strength of heredity and the curtailed power of the environment, but just transform an ugly woman into a pretty one, and she will leap from pessimism to optimism like a torrent of water that has been unnaturally dammed.

For men make this world a very pleasant place for pretty women...Most women with beauty marry young, and are quite content to let someone else fight the battle of life for them.(79)

Closely associated with ugliness was an inordinate intellectualism. As the Vanity Fair writer explained, plain women had to use their brains

to provide for themselves whereas fair women were given all they needed by male admirers. For women, love and intellectual equality with men were ruled out as mutually exclusive. Countless humorous (?) anecdotes of the period describe New Women's failures to secure affection. Men naturally preferred good wives and mothers.⁸⁰

If she was young, the intellectual woman was usually depicted in the drab clothing, dull hair-style and glasses already described. Furthermore, she was usually preoccupied with all sorts of pursuits that her adversaries found intolerably boring. The woman 'with a mission' (other than marriage and children) was a frequent target of ridicule. Two studies of these types are provided by Punch. The young 'Latter-day Girl' (fig. 16) was satirized as having a mission to the Boot Black Brigade. In 'Compensation' (fig. 17), an older woman who attracts attention at a party is not envied by a younger one who only notices how ugly she is. Sexual stereotypes are carried to extremes when the younger woman's male companion generously recognizes the older woman's intellectual abilities. The contrast of the two comments misogynistically infers that women are much more spiteful and competitive than men.

As this cursory examination of graphic illustration indicates, the visual type-casting of the New Woman as sexually deviant involved endowing her with qualities that were antithetical to the feminine ideal. Neither her physical appearance, nor her behaviour was spared. Ugly instead of pretty, New Women were almost always very tall, thin, and angular, as opposed to the petite, rounded and soft feminine norm. Their large and

imposing physical presence meant they tended to dominate rather than complement the space they occupied. Alone when respectable women would be accompanied, they resolutely pursued a range of unladylike activities, particularly those of an intellectual variety.

V Beardsley's Images of Deviant Women

Many of these qualities can be detected in Beardsley's Yellow Book images of women which were viewed as sexual misfits and freaks par excellence. Before turning to specific examples of his work, it is important to realize that as an illustrator of New Fiction and Drama, establishment critics immediately saw Beardsley as part of a conspiratorial clique. This clique of 'advanced' novelists, journalists, playwrights and illustrators was blamed for conjuring up the mythical New Woman out of thin air. Some attributed her to the genius of Oscar Wilde, while others claimed she was the offspring of 'hysteria and Continental decadentism'.⁸¹ All of her adversaries denied her objective existence.⁸² One commentator in Woman claimed 'She is a figment invented by journalists who make guineas out of her for articles.'⁸² However, the profit motives of her creators were the least of the establishment's fears. Far more worrying was the spectre of other 'normal' women following the New Woman's dangerous precedent, as a Vanity Fair writer observed:

...we do not believe in the New Woman's existence. She is a caricature. We read of her in books, and we see her on the stage. But we have not met her....she may come into spurious existence presently, for there are silly women who will imitate anything for effect; but so far we

have seen nothing more like her than the 'Heavenly Twins' at a fancy ball, or a New Woman on the stage. Beyond a doubt she is, in her fulness, the flabby, unwholesome creation of a morbid mind;...(83)

These comments connect the New Woman to a subversive social strategy that was hatched by unhealthy minds.

The idea was pursued in a poem and accompanying illustration in Punch (fig. 18) entitled 'Misoneogyny' in which 'A Batchelor' expressed his revulsion for advanced women. He also claimed the modern monster only existed in fancy and print. The illustration amplified the point showing an evil artist complete with horns and hooves creating the New Woman. It seems worth noting that the canvas bears a striking resemblance to many of Beardsley's pictures in terms of its blank background and the tall slender woman in profile whose outline was filled in with large masses of black and white. Although it does not appear to refer to a specific Beardsley design, the caricatured canvas does resemble other Punch cartoons of the artist's work (e.g. fig. 55 'Published at the Bodily Head').⁸⁵

In any case there is little doubt that Beardsley would have been one of the artists Punch's readers would have had in mind since from the end of 1893 and throughout 1894, his work was publicly associated with a number of advanced causes. These included illustrations for Oscar Wilde's Salome, a number of New Women's novels - especially George Egerton's Keynotes (fig. 20), designs for advanced theatre groups, and an article for the Idler entitled 'How to Court the Advanced Woman' (fig. 19). Here I will confine my investigation to the Keynotes and Idler designs

since the Salome illustrations and theatrical commissions will be analyzed in a subsequent section. The Keynotes design which was initially printed in dark green on a light green cover first appeared when the novel was published in December, 1893. Although more will be said about the role of New Fiction within the publishing industry in the second section, it should be emphasized that this was a landmark volume of the advanced school.

Concentrating on the design, one finds striking resemblances between its vocabulary and that of the previously discussed New Women cartoon imagery. The advanced woman on the left dominates the cover in terms of her size and prominent location, literally towering over the other two figures. Furthermore, her thin angular proportions recall those of the unwomanly creature in the 'Smoking Room of a Ladies Club' (fig. 14). Her unearthly artificiality is reinforced by a disconcerting absence of lower limbs and the fact that she seems to be painfully supported by a pole held by the pierrot beneath. Although the misogynist undertones of this detail cannot be overlooked, Beardsley's New Woman does not fit the typically ugly spinster image. Her curling hair and fashionably designed sleeves, hat and parasol are more like the feminine attire of the two new members in the smoking room. Yet she is clearly not of the same weak and submissive temperament, since she fearlessly scrutinizes the viewer.

This combination of advanced and traditional devices creates a tension that dislocates the viewer. How is she/he to respond? The sense of irresolution is heightened by the curious theatricality of the scene

with its unstable black and white background, the commedia dell'arte guises of the two characters below, and the evil cloven hoof of the grotesque manikin playing a heart-shaped guitar that has comic and tragic masks attached to its strings. The New Woman plainly belongs to this artificial atmosphere. But the very pervasiveness of the unreality presents problems for the viewer. Unlike the previously examined popular cartoon imagery, the New Woman is not immediately at odds with the rest of the 'normal' world. In Beardsley's design there is no anchoring point of recognizable 'reality' within the picture to reassure the viewer that such creatures are indeed abnormal.

Beardsley's Keynotes cover was also reproduced in the Idler article on 'How to Court the Advanced Woman'.⁸⁶ In it, a number of prominent pro-and anti- New Women writers were asked to briefly comment on the topic. Intended as a light-hearted and entertaining debate, most of the New Women contributors were forced onto the defensive by Angus Evan Abbott's introductory caricature of the Advanced Woman. Claiming they did not support such strident stereotypes, they nevertheless advocated women's right to expand their sphere of activity. Superficially, the anti-feminists' position looked quite similar since they also argued that women should be more energetic. However, their argument was primarily directed towards turning indolent Society ladies into better mothers, rather than getting middle-class women out of the home. Typically Dr. Arabella Kenealy reiterated her well known opinion on the subject:

The true Advanced Woman is not at all the latch-key licensed, tobacco-tainted, gala contaminated Frankenstein, which...strides up and down the pages of

modern literature. The veritable Advanced Woman is she who, pressed by necessity or touched by the conviction that to be a drone in a hive of workers ...is unworthy,...This woman recognizes that to deck herself out in fine clothes which represent the toil and wear and tear of a daughter-ridden father, and lounge about life's street-corners until some man comes along to keep her, is not altogether the part nature meant her to play in the great human scheme.(87)

Kenealy goes on to lament the passage of the golden old days when even wealthy women's lives were filled with domestic duties. Worst of all is the Society woman's willingness to let others usurp the 'grave mysteries of motherhood' by caring for her children.

Indeed, Kenealy's lecture was directed towards precisely that type of Society female Beardsley portrayed in the title-page illustration (fig. 20). Idleness was not only the keynote of the title, but also of her opulently restrictive clothing and pose of casually leaning on a tassled cushion. Self-indulgence led to a weakening of moral fibre - something to which the pampered aristocracy were especially prone. If such a woman was the target of anti-feminist attack, it is also true that in many respects, she was the antithesis of feminist aspirations. How can one make sense of this apparent contradiction?

In fact, Beardsley's statement of aristocratic values in this context was not as paradoxically irrelevant as it initially appears. It should be stressed that his notion of advanced females involved sexual assertiveness rather than asexual respectability. In many ways the sexually assertive New Woman complemented the decadent aristocrat since both rejected the conventional standards of middle-class respectability.

The reactionary nostalgia of the former temporarily found itself allied with the progressive vision of the latter in a most unholy alliance against the social status-quo. As Linda Dowling has observed, philistine critics of the 1890s perceived the decadent as new and the New Woman as decadent.⁸⁸ A useful illustration of the latter is provided by another Du Maurier cartoon from Punch entitled 'Our Decadents (Female)' (fig. 21). Here an emancipated female writer shocks a staid member of the male legal establishment by raising the subject of a sordid legal case which she plans to incorporate into an advanced play. Young ladies of her class are not supposed to be aware of such things, let alone publicize their knowledge. The alliance of New Women with other socially marginalized groups is a significant theme which I will return to in a moment vis-a-vis their relationship with the working class.

Finally, the likeness between the woman of the Idler article and Beardsley's second drawing for the 'Comedy Ballet of Marionettes' (fig. 31) published in the Yellow Book during July 1894 deserves mention. The two women's hair-style, dress and feather ornamentation are virtually identical. Significantly this earlier series dealt with the theme of lesbian seduction, which must have reinforced the prevailing mythology of the aristocracy's moral degeneracy. This highly conspicuous example of Beardsley's deviant women will be examined in further detail below.

At this point, however, having firmly established the fact that Beardsley had a reputation for depicting advanced women, I would like to look at the way some of his early Yellow Book illustrations defied

conventional notions of the feminine ideal. One of the most marked cases was his title-page for the magazine's first volume (fig. 22) which shows a young woman standing in the foreground playing a piano in the middle of a field. She is stylishly dressed in a feather hat (of the type worn in the Idler illustration), and a long black dress with wide sleeves. Immediately one is struck by the incongruity of this household piano with its candle surrealistically set in the midst of nature. Heightening the bizarre effect is the fact that the wind is blowing the trees on the far side of the field, but not the candle and feathers of the woman's hat.

Critics evidently were confused by the curious subject matter. While a few tried to concentrate on the pretty figure of the girl, most could not ignore the instrument's disturbing location.⁸⁹ Speaking for many, the To-Day reviewer protested:

Surely it is not necessary to draw a woman standing up to play a cottage piano out in a meadow; there must be some way of avoiding that. I am not asking Mr. Beardsley to translate life literally; he is free to take from it no more than some suggestions for decorative designs. But until we are educated more, or educated differently, the cottage piano in the pastures will hardly seem inevitable.(90)

Others also found the scale within the picture disconcerting, noticing such distortions as the piano keys appearing fifteen inches long.⁹¹ Ultimately the World critic ended up asking 'Who wants these fantastic pictures, like Japanese sketches gone mad, of a woman with a black tuft for a head, and snake-like fingers starting off the keyboard of a piano...?'⁹²

Beardsley, invariably thriving on such controversy, replied in a letter to the editor of the Pall Mall Budget:

Sir, - So much exception has been taken, by both the Press, and by some private persons to my title-page of 'The Yellow Book', that I must plead for space in your valuable paper to enlighten those who profess to find my picture unintelligible. It represents a lady playing a piano in the middle of a field. "Unpardonable affectation" cry the critics. But let us listen to ~~Rowet~~. "Christopher Willibald Ritter Von Gluck, in order to warm his imagination and to transport himself to Aulis or Sparta, was accustomed to place himself in the middle of a field. In this situation, with his piano before him, and a bottle of champagne on each side, he wrote in the open air his two 'Iphigenias', his 'Orpheus' and some other works." I tremble to think what critics would say ~~had~~ I introduced those bottles of champagne. And yet we ~~do~~ not call Gluck decadent.(93)

Beardsley taunted his critics by providing an anecdote from the life of a ~~respected~~ composer as the basis for this seemingly contrived scene. ~~Althoug~~ the authority he cited and the anecdote itself were probably ~~fiction~~, this would not have been immediately apparent to many of his readers.⁹⁴ His ostensible fidelity to his source challenged the critics' criteria of affectation (and also by implication their criteria of ~~Realism~~). Furthermore, Beardsley underlined their inconsistent use of ~~them~~ decadent.

~~But~~ Beardsley neglected to mention was perhaps more significant. ~~The fact~~ that this was not an image of a man, but rather of a woman playing piano, must have proven doubly disturbing. Although numerous ~~were~~ amateur pianists, they were scarcely ever taken seriously as ~~artists~~.⁹⁵ Hence the precedent of Gluck hardly could have justified ~~the~~ behaviour of a woman. Given the dominant assumptions about

women's lack of creative talent, this woman was either an unusual exception to the feminine rule, or worse yet, a sheer exhibitionist. Beardsley was right in trembling to think about including the bottles of champagne - women simply could not behave in such a free and easy fashion.

In this instance, the problem was exacerbated by Beardsley's violation of one of the most treasured symbols of middle-class domestic respectability. The piano was above all a sign of material comfort and feminine accomplishment. By the end of the nineteenth century, the mass production and lower prices of both the instruments and their sheet music meant that they were a staple of even lower-middle-class drawing-rooms.⁹⁶ Like French conversation, embroidery, shell-picture-making, and ribbon work, the piano was a suitable occupation for leisured ladies.⁹⁷ In fact, by the end of the century the piano-playing heroine was a stock character of magazines for middle-class girls.⁹⁸ Like novel reading, the piano provided wholesome family entertainment in the privacy of one's own home. However, located out in an open field, both the piano and the woman were stripped of their normally reassuring domestic associations. This woman not only entered the public sphere, but also directly undermined the notion of the private sanctuary. Her public role was not merely an additional dimension of the old femininity, since things on the home front were irrevocably altered. In this respect, the design also seems to have mocked the rural pretensions of bourgeois suburbia by putting a 'cottage' piano where one would logically expect to find a 'real' cottage - in the middle of the countryside. The middle class' passion for a manicured, suburban version

of nature is carried to ridiculous extremes.

Prostitutes were another highly visible group of supposedly sexually deviant women that Beardsley pictured in the Yellow Book. Two of his most conspicuous examples appeared in the first volume - 'L'Education Sentimentale' (fig. 23) and 'A Night Piece' (fig. 24). Although the subject of both works was clearly recognized, it was largely discussed in euphemistic terms. Max Beerbohm was more explicit when he describes 'L'Education Sentimentale' in a letter to Reggie Turner:

Aubrey has done a marvellous picture for the Yellow Book 'l'Education sentimentale' he calls it. A fat elderly whore in a dressing-gown and huge hat of many feathers is reading from a book to the sweetest imaginable little girl, who looks before her, with hands clasped behind her back, roguishly winking. Such a strange curved attitude, and she wears a long pinafore of black silk, quite tight, with the frills of a petticoat showing at the ankles and shoulders: awfully like Ada Reeve, that clever malapert, is her face - you must see it. It haunts me.(99)

A surprising number of reviewers seem to have shared Beerbohm's positive verdict - especially praising the piece's humour.¹⁰⁰ Presumably this referred to the young girl's evident experience which rendered the lecture superfluous. Hence the allusion to Flaubert's famous earlier novel of the same title that recounted a youth's amorous experiences. Beerbohm's comparison with Ada Reeve, a prominent music-hall performer, further suggests the image was interpreted by more liberal critics as an entertaining turn or theatrical sketch.¹⁰¹ In other words, it was seen as a contrived cultural scenario rather than a specific reference to the daily business of prostitution.

Exactly the reverse seems to have happened in the case of his widely detested 'A Night Piece' (fig. 24) where the only favourable comments came from Philip Hamerton reviewing the first Yellow Book in an article in the second issue. He managed to conclude that at least Beardsley had achieved a discouraging effect on the mind by effectively creating a dismal background. Otherwise, commentators were unreservedly hostile, even in cases where they had liked 'L'Education Sentimentale'. In this respect, the view of the Globe was typical: 'There is some humour in "L'Education Sentimentale", but the "Night Piece" and the "Portrait of Mrs. Patrick Campbell" are more than grotesque - they strike us as ludicrous'.¹⁰² In a similar vein, the Whitehall reviewer remarked:

The faculty is also his [Beardsley's] ...of reproducing with something of a humorous exactness and the agreeable leer of calculating license; in proof of which gifts "L'Education Sentimentale", on page 55 may be advantageously studied. It is but an exalted form of le petit journal pour rire; but it is distinctly cabable [sic], not to say fastidious work of its kind. Whereas, of what kind is the "Night Piece" on page 27? (103)


Again the writer draws a crucial distinction between a naughty scene of comic amusement and something else which was obviously much more disquieting.

This something else was dissected more precisely by the Speaker reviewer who linked Beardsley's picture to Arthur Symon's poem, 'Stella Maris' also in the same volume:

Still pursuing his career of villainy, the former [Beardsley] produces "A Night Piece", the principal character being a lady who has, naturally enough, mistaken her hat for an omnibus, and is about to drive in

it past the Chelsea Barracks. The cleverness of Mr. Beardsley is monstrous - an epithet which also fits his artistic impudence and his affectation....Nor must we leave out of this Chamber of Horrors the figure of Mr. Aurthur Symons, the "high-toned" Don Juan of the pavement, who sings his Picadilly amours with a zest that would be ludicrous if it were not loathsome. (104)

Here it is prostitution on London's streets - by the Chelsea Barracks and around Picadilly - that is singled out as the problem. Significantly it is the common street-walker rather than the more elegant demimondaine that is the object of reprobation.

Judging from a Punch caricature of July 1894 entitled 'How it is Done' (fig. 25), it is the cheap working-class vulgarity of these women and their dreary surroundings which gave offense. The fact that this was a caricature of Beardsley's work is stated in the upper left where apologies are offered to , which was the artist's well known mark. The street-walker of the Punch cartoon combines features from both Beardsley's previously discussed illustrations. Her heavily lined facial features and squinting expression recall that of the older whore, while her dress resembles the street-walker of 'A Night Piece'. Like the latter, she too is apparently outdoors and in the process of soliciting a typical West End johnny. Everything about the woman is unnaturally hideous from the skull and insects about her person to her gaudy attire. Even a black cat arches up and hisses at her.

On closer inspection, a sense of artificiality pervades the entire scene which is subdivided by a theatrical curtain. The implications of this device are spelled out in the title 'How it is Done (An Art Recipe)'

and accompanying rhyme which imply Beardsley's images are merely dramatic rhetoric as opposed to real art. Even more to the point is the fact that Beardsley's conjuring tricks rely on the shabby devices of music-hall turns involving the pose of 'front-row "Tottie"' and 'hat as worn by "Coster Loo"'. Both Beardsley's subject matter, including the background 'like a slum in foggy weather', and his style are identified as working-class.¹⁰⁵ In this respect the sign post 'Keep to the Left' is particularly suggestive. On a general level, it amplifies the connotations of evil surrounding both the couple and the dreary location. More specifically, it may have been intended as a political reference to the horrors of socialism. Although this will be pursued further in the third section, it should be noted that prominent exponents of the 'new' in literature, art and theatre included a large number of socialists. Significantly Beardsley was charged with belonging to the left-wing of the English impressionist school (See Section Three fn. 174). Furthermore, this identification of Beardsley and his style as working class may have been designed to snub an upstart illustrator who aspired to have his work considered 'fine art'.

The sexually and socially outcast status of prostitutes was frequently connected with that of New Women - not only by advanced writers themselves who frequently explored prostitution in their works, but also by many of their adversaries who feared an alliance between both dispossessed groups. In many respects, the freedoms sought by New Women especially suffrage, education, and employment resembled traditional working-class demands. Class anxieties were kindled by the growing disenchantment of

middle-class women with the old distinguishing hallmarks of their social position - conspicuous leisure, suburban isolation, and chaperonage. The impending blurring of class lines worried many anti-feminists who felt middle-class women would automatically join working-class ranks if they abandoned their protected life-style:

Look at the result on the lower classes of this equal freedom and equal knowledge [of the sexes]. Look at the laundry-hands, for instance; at the factory girls; at dwellers in the slums; even at domestic servants; and then say whether the "latchkey" demanded by some of our lady-girls and matrons has wrought to better issues among those emancipated than we find among the sheltered... We all know how "office work" takes off the subtle perfume and beauty of a girl's character. When once girls are allowed to trail about the streets alone and are forced to fight for themselves, they lose... the distinctive charm of maidenhood.(106)

Another commentator argued that 'The New Woman, after all, is often only the vulgar woman who has missed her vocation, or a 'lady' with the aspirations of a factory-girl or washerwoman.'¹⁰⁷ Repeatedly regarded as class traitors for adopting the mores of their social inferiors, New Women were variously described as female insurrectionists of the French revolutionary kind or moral anarchists.¹⁰⁸ The latter charge, seen in the light of the anarchist bombings in London during the summer of 1894 was not lightly intended.¹⁰⁹

In addition to the general association with radical working-class politics, New Women were more specifically linked with female prostitutes. Certainly a cross class alliance of feminists and prostitutes had been forged, albeit precariously during the campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts from the 1860s to the 1880s. During the 1890s,

some strands of social purity continued to assist prostitutes as the victims of male abuse, even though many of their solutions were increasingly repressive. In the New Fiction and Drama, advanced writers used prostitution to emphasize the seamy underside of sexual respectability. In fact, in many ways, the sex-mania of New Women writers paralleled the supposedly insatiable sexual appetites of the whore. Both were characterized as femmes fatales who preyed upon unsuspecting men for commercial gain: the former usurping his traditional privileges and the latter infecting him with debilitating diseases. Furthermore, both were cast as enemies of the family and society.

Contemporary literary critics often used the Picadilly by night metaphor to describe the lurid New Fiction.¹¹⁰ One writer invoked it in a discussion of an unnamed new quarterly review (almost certainly the Yellow Book) which promoted the writings of 'defiant men' and 'revolting women':

A quarterly review has been invented for the furtherance of this literature, and several series give it hospitality. On the man's side it is cynical as well as nasty; it assumes that there is no world except Picadilly after dark, or perhaps the coulisses of some disreputable music-hall. It gathers scraps from the more notorious French performers in this line, and it mocks at what is supposed to be the British conscience. On the woman's side it seems at least to be in deadly earnest, but many of the assumptions are the same, mutatis mutandis, and the expression of them is even less veiled.(111)

In fact, these references to Picadilly by night and disreputable music-halls provide an important clue to understanding the response to Beardsley's 'A Night Piece'. The street-walker was parading in from the the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square. A comparison with an engraving of

the music-hall's exterior (fig. 26) confirms the location of Beardsley's sketchily outlined architecture.¹¹² Published in April in the first volume of the Yellow Book, a major scandal involving prostitution at the Empire Theatre exploded in October, although it had been brewing for several months.

The crisis came to a head when Mrs. Ormiston Chant, a leading member of the N.V.A., opposed the Empire Theatre's bid to renew its licence from the London County Council in October, 1894. Mrs. Chant justified her actions on the basis that the cleansing of the Empire promenade, one of the most flagrant haunts of West End prostitutes, would set a conspicuous example to the rest of society.¹¹³ The Empire promenade had become something of a 'club' for aristocrats, colonial officials, white-collar clerks and civil servants, military guardsman, university students, tourists, and other Bohemian types, in addition to ordinary music-hall goers.¹¹⁴ In retaliation, the Empire's management immediately circulated termination notices to their staff of several hundred and announced imminent closure.

The ensuing letters and debates in the press swamped editorial columns for several weeks.¹¹⁵ Feelings ran high on both sides with large public meetings to rally support. Essentially the interest groups fractured along party lines - publicans and music-hall proprietors and patrons being closely associated with the Conservative party and Evangelical, teetotallers, and social purity campaigners being connected with the Liberal party and Labour benches of the London County Council.

Eventually Mrs. Chant's pressure forced the Empire to erect a large screen hiding the bar and soliciting from the rest of the audience. In the course of the Theatre's re-opening after its modification, a minor riot ensued in which 200 - 300 young aristocratic rowdies, one of their ring-leaders being Winston Churchill, tore down the screen loudly denouncing social purity and their political supporters.¹¹⁶

In the wave of moral panic surrounding the incident, charges of aristocratic vice met rejoinders of female prudery. Mrs. Chant and her followers were castigated as New Women of the most meddlesome description. There is little doubt where Beardsley, a devotee of west-end halls, stood on the issue. He was firmly allied with the decadent vice-ridden upper classes that social purity claimed championed the promenade. His attitude was revealed in a subsequent drawing originally entitled 'A Suggested Reform in Ballet Costume' (fig. 27) that was later published in A London Garland in 1895.¹¹⁷ Here the ballerina lavishly covered from head to toe probably satirized the reformers' intentions of covering up ballet girls and models in tableaux-vivants. In particular, during several press interviews, Mrs. Chant claimed that she could easily design a more decent ballet costume.¹¹⁸ Certainly Beardsley's position was shared by the vast majority of magazine illustrators. L. Raven-Hill, Phil May, Eckhardt and numerous others contributed sketches to the press that made social purity supporters the butt of endless jokes.¹¹⁹ It should be emphasized that this was a far from progressive position - either politically given the jingoistic and imperialistic flavour of the hall; or in terms of women whose working-class members were type-cast as disposable

objects of male pleasure. Nevertheless such an allegiance must have fostered his reputation as a decadent.

The Empire scandal accentuated the split within feminist ranks. New Women writers and actresses apparently had little to say about the issue. Their position must have been particularly awkward. Opposed to the kind of exploitation the Empire traded in, these writers and actresses must have found it equally impossible to endorse a campaign of moral regulation which would ultimately harm the prostitutes by throwing them onto the streets, and could easily be turned against the New Fiction and Drama.¹²⁰

Curiously Beardsley's 'A Night Piece' was not well received even by conservative papers which championed the Empire's cause, although they were less abusive than those with Evangelical connections.¹²¹ The problem seems to have rested on the image's inappropriate location in the high brow Yellow Book, rather than its explicitness per se. Before the scandal broke in October and cartoons ridiculing social purity appeared all over the illustrated press, Empire promenade cartoons seem to have been the special property of such inexpensive male entertainment magazines as Pick-Me-Up. This type of cartoon focused on sexually risqué or titillating male and female exchanges rather than mocking social purity. Two typical examples from this source (figs. 28-29) stress the women's dubious virtue much more forcefully than Beardsley had done in 'A Night Piece' by surrounding the women with leering men. Indeed such material which was the staple fare of Pick-Me-Up, was not considered suitable in

the Yellow Book which had higher cultural pretensions.¹²² Evidently Beardsley offended by importing a curious foreign alliance of Cockney vulgarity and aristocratic vice into the pages of a predominantly upper-middle-class journal that was read by adults of both sexes. These were exactly the interests and mores that the middle-class collectively defined itself against, no matter how much attraction they provided for individual members within its ranks.

In addition to the prostitute, another category of visibly deviant women included among Beardsley's Yellow Book contributions was that of the lesbian who appeared in the series of three illustrations entitled 'Comedy Ballet of Marionettes performed by the troupe of the Theatre Impossible' which were published in the second volume (figs. 30-32). Like the prostitute, the lesbian was not a New Woman per se, but presented similar types of challenges to orthodox norms of middle-class femininity. In terms of this research, this series is highly problematic in several respects. First is the fact that the images are scarcely mentioned by reviewers which makes them extremely awkward to analyze in terms of public response. Of course one can speculate on the reasons for this noticeable critical silence, but it is impossible to offer definitive answers. Also troublesome is the paucity of existing research on nineteenth century lesbianism which remained a virtually invisible practice until well into the twentieth century.¹²³ Given these obstacles, the following discussion will be of a brief and tentative nature.

Brian Reade has identified the scene as one of lesbian seduction.

In the first illustration a woman in eighteenth century dress is conducted by a lascivious dwarf through an archway into another world. Next shown in an 1890s outfit, the woman is joined by a lesbian in bloomers. Reade has suggested the receding chin of the lesbian connotes a lack of moral fibre in phrenological terms.¹²⁴ Furthermore her prominent cheek bones, bulging forehead and the suggestion of a harelip are all physical abnormalities that the newly expanding field of criminal anthropology identified as typical congenital defects of the habitual criminal.¹²⁵ In the final scene the ostensibly 'normal' woman is shown dancing with her lesbian companion who both smilingly point towards each other. The male protector or husband of the 'normal' woman wearing the horns of a cuckold is excluded from their relationship dancing clumsily by himself off to one side. Here the stage-managed event is gleefully watched by a group of dwarves, including the one who initiated the proceedings. The changing costume and masks held by the dwarf in the first scene and the 'normal' woman in the third carry further connotations of sexual licence as will be discussed in the fourth section.

Although Max Nordau's infamous Degeneration was not published in English until the following year in 1895, his ideas about the diseased nature of modern art were only a colourful new expression of ideas already in circulation among critics of the Yellow Book.¹²⁶ The work of criminal anthropologists who greatly influenced Nordau, was already familiar to an English public through the writings of Havelock Ellis and Lombroso and Ferrero.¹²⁷ For instance, Ellis' The Criminal first published in 1890, noticed the perverse sexual tendencies displayed in

prison art including their primitive figures and the fact that prisoners seemed incapable of representing beauty.¹²⁸ Significantly these were charges frequently levelled at Beardsley's women. In this respect, the National Observer's general remarks on contributions to the first volume are worth examining:

But what shall be said of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, who contributes four sketches besides the title-page and the design for the cover? His women - he mostly draws women - are of a surprising angularity, surprising height, and surprisingly bedraped. They resemble nothing on the earth;...with their lips of a more than Hottentot thickness, their bodies of a lath-like flatness, their impossibly pointed toes and fingers, their eyes which have the form and comeliness of an unshelled snail.(129)

Significantly the imagery of New Women - their angularity, height, unusual clothing, and asexually flat physiques, are described as ugly and primitive, both of which were key attributes of the criminal type. The repeated complaints about the obvious corruption in the faces of Beardsley's women was singled out for criticism in the case of his 'Comedy Ballet' series by the Daily Chronicle writer who asked: 'And has he no other face at all in his gallery that the same most unlovely and uninteresting one is forced upon us to the point of fatigue?'¹³⁰ This obsession with facial corruption was also shared by Ellis who observed of prisoners - 'Beautiful faces, it is well known, are rarely found among criminals. This prejudice against the ugly and also against the deformed is not without sound foundation.'¹³¹ Part of this ugliness stemmed from the fact that the criminal was considered an atavistic regression to a primitive type being frequently compared to the Hottentot, African or Abyssinian.¹³²

Certainly by the time the third Yellow Book was published in November, 1894, criminal and pathological terminology had penetrated artistic discourses to such an extent that the National Observer parodied it by titling its review of the magazine 'A Xanthopiate'. The pathological term, xanthelasma referred to the growth of yellowish spots or plaques on the eyelids.¹³² Complaining of the cult of the 'Yellow Gal', the reviewer pointed out that:

The truth is that Mr. Beardsley scorns to picture any person who is not suffering from xanthelasma, which is defined in the medical books [not accurately] as an appearance 'caused by hypertrophy of the sebaceous glands and fatty degeneration of the subcutaneous connective tissue.' This extreme xanthelasma is the reason that Mr. Beardsley's figures are attenuate where you would expect them to be slim.(134)

Although the new medical pathology and criminology permeated the writings of many critics, others seem to have either ignored or remained unaware of it. The Globe writer, for instance, detected no such clear-cut meaning in Beardsley's 'Comedy Ballet' series. Instead his/her response was simply the puzzled comment that the designs seemed to have some theatrical connection.¹³⁵ However, such benign confusion was exceptional. Again more typical was the National Observer's comments on the 'ungainly and repulsive dolls in impossible poses, usually in an impossible perspective.'¹³⁶ Here it is hard to assess whether or not the writer perceived a deviant sexuality. Possibly the marionette participants and staged setting downplayed the images' precise sexual implications, implying a distinction between play-acting and reality.

This element of fantasy also carries the more familiar misogynist connotations of male pornography. Ironically it was in male pornographic discourses that the image of the lesbian was most visible - albeit in a strictly negative sense being produced by men for male consumption and ~~and~~ invariably involving the woman's ultimate ruin, murder or suicide.¹³⁷ Working across the polarities of virtue/vice and innocence/depravity, pornographic discourses provided pleasure by referring to norms that were outrageously transgressed. For instance, this has been observed in the imagery of child prostitution where the innocence of childhood is countered by visible signs of immorality (e.g. exposed genitalia or a depraved stare).¹³⁸ In many respects, the same type of mechanisms operate in Beardsley's series - the attractive and ostensibly normal woman being led astray by an unnatural dwarf; the contrast between her and the visibly degenerate lesbian, and finally that between her as spectacle and the voyeuristic pleasure of the dwarfs. Furthermore, misogynist overtones emanate from the physically hideous lesbian's emancipated bloomer suit of the 1890s.

Yet if this was a hostile attack on the New Woman, critics missed the point, struggling to express their outrage in hopelessly inadequate terms - either because they were unfamiliar with the vocabulary of homosexuality or afraid to name the activities. The anger of the Daily Chronicle provides a typical case in point:

...his "Theatre Impossible" drawings are in his very worst vein. Extremely clever, so far as outline and massing of lights and shadows and fertility of grotesque imagination go but essentially vulgar in idea and offensive.... Mr. Beardsley is still very young; his

education (except in the use of his tools) is to be made, and therefore there is plenty of room to hope tht he will someday discover that the suggestion of corruption attracts only two kinds of mind - the callow and the putrescent, and that artists should neither exhibit nor cater for them.(139)

The critical pattern of incoherent rage or conspicuous silence on the subject suggests an unwillingness to come to terms with the subject in much the same way that the dangers of feminists not reproducing were vaguely alluded to by their opponents.

Once again the contradictory implications of social labelling arise. By making a spectacle of deviance, Beardsley's images seem to have reinforced existing standards of appropriate behaviour. And yet the women who were not obviously punished or victimized evidently shook up establishment viewers. As in so many of Beardsley's images, one is struck by their disturbingly ambivalent representation of women.

VI Beardsley as an Effeminate Deviant

Part of this ambivalence can be attributed to the fact that these images of women were made by a man who flagrantly flaunted the dominant ideology of masculinity. Beardsley's contemporaries found his 'sexlessness' particularly disconcerting. This term commonly applied to both New Women and Decadents referred not so much to prudery (although it could signify that on occasion) as to the absence of a set of biologically predetermined behavioural traits. In other words, it connoted a visible absence of femininity in women and masculinity in men.¹⁴⁰

This overlapping of sexual and gender identities was an integral component of the ideology of separate spheres. In art and literature, for example, the work of men and women was thought to have been indelibly imprinted with the sexual characteristics of its maker. Thus the work of men was typically executed on a large scale, contained heroic activities and adopted a rational perspective, while that of women was correspondingly smaller, more common-place, and intuitive or sentimental in approach. These gender divisions were also rigidly hierarchical: men naturally tackled the highest genres (i.e. public history painting in fresco or oil) while women suited lesser tasks (i.e. flower painting, domestic genre scenes). Furthermore men were a priori professionals, while women were all too frequently regarded as amateurs. The language of masculine power and domination became the index of success: 'virility' or 'manliness' bearing the stamp of highest approval. Despite the fact that femininity could be a desirable attribute, it automatically implied distinction in an inferior category.¹⁴¹

The charge of 'sexlessness' applied to both Beardsley's form and content. Stylistically his work was discussed in such distinctly feminine terms as 'decorative', 'delicate', 'delicious' 'refined' and 'charming'. On the whole, although his innovative outline technique was widely admired, his small scale pen and ink illustrations were hardly the most promising vehicles for an aspiring male artist. Ironically while his style was analyzed in feminine terms, his representations of women were condemned as masculine - 'intolerably ugly', 'leering' 'unhealthy' and of

course 'sexless'. In many ways Beardsley reversed the classically successful formula of such academic artists as Frederick Leighton who specialized in depicting feminine women in a masculine medium and style. The sexual 'abnormalities' of Beardsley's Yellow Book work demanded explanation. Inevitably critics found it easier to see Beardsley's unnorthodox work as the product of an effeminate persona, rather than pursuing the questions it posed about the validity of gender differences.

This strategy explains the inordinate emphasis placed on Beardsley's effeminate characteristics. Of course such tactics were not confined to Beardsley but were applied to the general category of decadent men which included most of Beardsley's associates at the Bodley Head - Grant Allen, Richard LeGallienne, Max Beerbohm, and Oscar Wilde to name just a few. A Punch cartoon entitled 'Our Decadents' (fig. 33) from May, 1894 focuses on a cloying relationship between two ultra-fashionably dressed young men. Labelled effete ones, these men address each other in diminutive terms and display a stereotypically feminine moodiness and obsessive interest in appearances.

In a similar way, Beardsley was repeatedly portrayed as an effete young man in public interviews and articles in the press. Journalists dwelled at length on his immaculately fashionable dress, his musical accomplishments, his decorative surroundings, his frail physical health and the fact that he lived with his mother.¹⁴² In many instances Beardsley became the personification of his work. A classic demonstration is provided in the gossip column of the Pelican where an anonymous

writer claimed Beardsley's recently published self-portrait (fig. 51) looked just like the sort of person who would have drawn the Avenue Theatre poster (fig. 83):

In his portrait, "sketched by himself" (the blame be on his own oddly-shaped head), Mr. Aubrey Beardsley seems to wear a quaint costume consisting of a black tie, no collar, and a coat of eccentric cut, with puffed sleeves like those of a woman's dress. Mr. Aubrey Beardsley likewise wears a fringe (in the portrait "sketched by himself") like unto that favoured by the average Fleet Street flower girl, and, of course, a soulful expression. In short, the sketch of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley "by himself" is about as pleasant to gaze upon as Mr. Beardsley's poster. (143)

This verbal image is visually amplified in a number of comparative studies of Phil May, the rough and tough Cockney, and Aubrey Beardsley, the effeminate boy (figs. 34-35). Significantly Margaret Armour later used a different version of the self-portrait from the Sun on the front page of her vehemently hostile article on Beardsley's immorality published in the Magazine of Art (fig. 36). I will return to the crucial fact that it was a self-portrait, but for the moment, I want to stress how well the drawing's striking femininity assisted Armour's objective of proving Beardsley was an immoral French aberration. Significantly the feminine features were greatly exaggerated in the Magazine of Art version: the forehead being reduced, the eyes half-closed, the chin made weaker and the lips fuller, and most conspicuously breasts and earrings added.

Cartoonists had a field day satirizing Beardsley in a number of female roles. For instance, a To-Day cartoon depicted the artist in the guise of Yvette Guilbert, the famous French cafe-singer (fig. 37). The long black gloves provide the clue to her identity (fig. 38). The

unmistakable references to Beardsley include the picture of the 'Fat Woman' which To-Day had published in an article on Beardsley the preceeding spring, the three-lined Beardsley mark, and the title 'An Illustration of the Gospel of To-Day. By Baudry Weirdsley'.¹⁴⁴ This image of Beardsley as a kind of spectacle or freak for public entertainment was also the subject of a later Punch satire of his frontispiece of *Juevenal* (figs. 155-156). Although the implications of the masqueraders and Beardsley's gaudy transvestism will be discussed in the fourth section, it is worth noting how closely Beardsley and his images of women were identified. In this case the lavish bows, frilly knickers, and large feather plumes were all well known hallmarks of his women's dress.

Certainly Beardsley's own public posing played directly into the hands of establishment journalists who amplified his deviance in much the way that Cohen has described. It was a constantly escalating spiral: to sell his works Beardsley needed to remain in the public eye, yet to sustain media interest over a protracted period of time he had to appear progressively more and more outrageous.¹⁴⁵ Hence the extravagant poses in self-portraits and interviews and the calculatedly controversial remarks. However successful Beardsley was at initially securing press attention, he had little control over the form the coverage took. While he thoroughly enjoyed affronting the philistine bourgeois, his marginal status actually strengthened their position. Type-cast as a young decadent, the press seldom reported anything that belied the image. Ultimately even when the role became a liability in the panic following the trial of

Wilde, Beardsley was unable to manufacture a new persona.

Whether or not Beardsley engaged in homosexual, transvestite, or other 'deviant' practices is largely irrelevant as far as this research is concerned. What matters was whether the public thought he did. In this respect, establishment critics did as much as possible to foster an illusion of an individual involved with every possible kind of moral transgression. In the final analysis, Beardsley's own effeminacy and the masculinity of his images of women were read as the cause and effects of an individual perversion. By implication, admirers of Beardsley's art were placed in a similarly awkward position. A demonstration of this mechanism at work is provided by the Public Opinion's review of his 'Girl and a Bookshop' (fig. 46) shown at the New English Art Club in 1893:

The girl is an impossible Japanese-cum-Egyptian figure....the whole thing has a charm, but it is undoubtedly the charm of degeneration and decay. These things do not belong to the sane in body or mind, and they do not find their out-and-out admirers in men of robust intellect, or of a wholly healthy moral tone. One is glad to escape from them to the art, noble in its virility...of such a painter as Mr. Mark Fisher,...[the critic continues to compare Beardsley and Fisher] it is like escaping from the fetid atmosphere, actual and moral of a music-hall to the windblown stretches of the open shore...Mr. Fisher can treat sympathetically a charming English maiden. In any painter who can do this without arriere pensee we are safe from the abnormalities of the libidinous, and of the equally objectionable asexual schools. [146]

As members of similarly despised minorities, New Women and Decadents were isolated symbols of an avant-garde revolt, rather than harbingers of any fundamental social upheaval.

Section One Footnotes

1 William Barry, 'The Strike of a Sex', Quarterly Review (July 1894), p. 317. The emphasis belongs to the original text.

2 Mona Caird, 'A Defence of the So-called "Wild Women"', Nineteenth Century (May 1892), pp. 818-820. The emphasis belongs to the original text.

3 Ibid., p. 814.

4 Stanley Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1972), p. 13. This discussion is mainly based on ch. 1 'Deviance and Moral Panics'.

5 Ibid., p. 9.

6 Ibid., pp. 16-19.

7 Mary MacIntosh, 'The Homosexual Role' in The Making of the Modern Homosexual Edited by Kenneth Plummer. (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. 32. Another useful essay also dealing with these social connotations of deviant roles is Jeffrey Weeks, 'Discourse, Desire and Sexual Deviance: Some Problems in a History of Homosexuality' in the same volume, pp. 76-111.

8 W.C. Lubenow, The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Towards State Intervention, 1833-1848 (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), ch. 1.

9 Jeffrey Weeks usefully charts the state's acquisition of sexual powers in Sex, Politics and Society (London: Longman, 1981), ch 5 'The Public and the Private: Moral Regulation in the Victorian Period'. For a discussion of this issue in relation to prostitution, consult Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982 reprint of 1980), introduction.

10 Weeks, Sex, p. 32.

11 Lynda Nead has convincingly demonstrated this point in a

comparative analysis of medical, legal, literary and high art representations of the prostitute from 1857-1860. The image of the prostitute as a conduit of disease in medical discourses contrasts sharply with her role as an object of visual pleasure. See Lynda Nead, 'A Definition of Deviancy: Prostitution and High Art in England 1850-1860'. Unpublished paper read at the Association of Art Historians Conference, March 30 - April 1, 1985. The specificity of visual representation has also been discussed in Rosika Parker and G. Pollock, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 118-119; and Janet Wolff, Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), ch. 5.

12

This same problem of assessing the relative ideological weights of different categories of literature, particularly in the case of 'literary' versus commercially successful novels has been raised by Thomas Gretton, 'French Historical Novels 1814-1835'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College, London, 1979.

13

E. Lynn Linton, 'The Wild Women as Politicians,' Nineteenth Century (March 1891), pp. 80-81.

14

This discussion of the feminine ideal will be limited to a schematic outline of the items New Women and late Victorian feminists found most objectionable. For more general investigations of the subject, see Viola Klein, The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology (London: International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction, 1946); Martha Vicinus, ed. Suffer and Be Still (London: Methuen & Co., 1980 reprint of 1972), and Deborah Gorham, The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

15

Here I have presented only a very schematic overview of Hall's discussion of specific legal and historical developments. See Catherine Hall, 'The Early Formation of Domestic Ideology' in Fit Work for Women. Edited by S. Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979): 15-32; 'Gender Divisions and Class Formation in the Birmingham Middle Class 1780-1850' in People's History and Socialist Theory. Edited by R. Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981): 164-175; and 'The butcher, the baker, the candlestickmaker: the shop and the family in the Industrial Revolution', in The Changing Experience of Women. Edited by E. Whitelegg et al. (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982): 2-16.

16

For a discussion of the implications of women's frail physical constitutions, consult Lorna Duffin, 'The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as an Invalid', in The Nineteenth Century Woman. Edited by S. Delamont and L. Duffin. (London: Croom Helm, 1978): 26-56. Another useful article which points out how the pretext of women's 'weakness' was used to justify

oppressive legal measures is Albie Sachs, 'The Myth of Male Protectiveness and the Legal Subordination of Women', in Women, Sexuality and Social Control. Edited by Carol Smart and Barry Smart. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978): 27-40.

17

Peter T. Cominos, 'Late Victorian Respectability and the Social System', International Review of Social History 8 (1963), p. 21.

18

Lucy Bland, 'The Domain of the Sexual: A Response', Screen Education 39 (Summer 1981), pp. 59-60.

19

Sachs, 'Myth', p. 34.

20

For a useful discussion of the middle-class domestic ideal, see Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance, and Howard Newby, 'Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society', in The Rights and Wrongs of Women. Edited by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983 reprint of 1976): 139-175.

21

For a helpful discussion of visual images of the honest working class that supported middle-class values, see Lynda Nead's analysis of The Sinews of Old England (1857) by George Elgar Hicks in her article 'The Magdalen in Modern Times: the Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting', Oxford Art Journal 7 no. 1 (1984), pp. 29-30. Also see her general discussion of how the feminine ideal operated in painting in the same article. The portrayal of idealized and outcast females in oil painting has also been considered by Helene E. Roberts, 'Marriage, Redundancy or Sin', in Suffer and Be Still, pp. 45-76.

22

This is the problem tackled by Olive Banks, Faces of Feminism (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981).

23

'An Appeal Against Female Suffrage', Nineteenth Century (June 1889): 781-788; and Millicent Garrett Fawcett and M.M. Dilke, 'The Appeal Against Female Suffrage: A Reply', Nineteenth Century (July 1889): 86-103. On the activities of the anti-feminists see Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres: the Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

24

Ray Strachey, The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain (London: Virago, 1979 reprint of 1928), pp. 276-285; Also useful on the suffrage issue is Constance Rover, Women's

Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1866-1914 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

25

This was a standard stereotype of the suffragist which closely resembles the much cartooned Lydia Becker. As Rosamund Billington, 'Ideology and Feminism', Women's Studies International Forum 5 no. 6 (1982), p. 669 notes:

Spectacles, for example, were considered unattractive, and the fact that Lydia Becker, a leader of the suffrage movement until 1880, wore them made her 'a gift to cartoonists'. 'A woman of plain and solid exterior [with] heavy features and severely dressed hair', she was seen as the archetypical strong-minded feminist.

For the close resemblance of the woman of this cartoon to a Lydia Becker type, see a Comus cartoon of her published in Strachy, Cause, unnumbered plates section.

26

A special committee was formed by Mrs. Jacob Bright in order to co-ordinate their lobbying efforts. It included Lydia Becker, Miss Wolstonholme, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Taylor, Doctor and Mrs. Pankhurst, Mrs. Venturi and Sir Charles Dilke. See Strachey, Cause, pp. 274-275.

27

Ibid., pp. 222-223.

28

Ibid., pp. 259-61. It should be noted that the fact that Philippa Fawcett was the daughter of Henry and Millicent Garrett Fawcett, both strong supporters of the suffrage movement was well known. The press coverage included such comments by the Westminster Gazette (June 9, 1890) which observed that her success proved women's 'intellectual...sinew...sheer mental strength and staying power'. Consult Ann Oakley, 'Millicent Garrett Fawcett: Duty and Determination', in Feminist Theorists. Edited by Dale Spender (London: The Women's Press, 1983), p. 188.

29

For a thorough analysis of an area which is too vast to examine here, see Lee Holcombe, Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850-1914 (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973).

30

Lady Jeune, Ladies at Work (London: A.D. Innes, 1893), and A. Amy Bulley and Margaret Whitley, Women's Work (London: Methuen, 1894).

31

Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Nineteenth Century, p. 98. It should be noted how cautiously Fawcett presented her argument. She claimed that it was first of all unmarried women who should be enfranchised, since married women were still legally dependent which meant their vote could be used by their husbands. Although Fawcett hinted that the status of married women should be changed, she felt that they could not be awarded the vote right away.

32

Emilia Dilke, Preface to Women's Work by Bulley and Whitley, p. viii. She also accepted the inevitability of lower wages for women. These, however, were debated issues in feminist circles. Josephine Butler, for instance, strongly opposed protective legislation limiting women's rights to work - see Judith Walkowitz, 'Male Vice and Feminist Virtue: Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Britain', History Workshop Journal 13 (Spring 1982), p. 82. Clara E. Collet, 'The Expenditure of Middle Class Working Women', Economic Journal (December, 1898): 543-553 was extremely critical of differential pay for the same work. She argued that women's professional wages (i.e. in journalism and teaching) were hopelessly inadequate making life physically uncomfortable and provision for retirement impossible.

33

Holcombe, Victorian Ladies, pp. 197-198.

34

Barbara Caine, 'Feminism, Suffrage and the Nineteenth Century English Women's Movement', Women's Studies International Forum 5 no. 6 (1982): 537-550. In this fascinating article Caine argues that the liberal individualism which characterized mainstream Victorian feminism actually undermined the more radical sexual and economic demands of earlier feminists.

35

As the movement became increasingly more coercive, it focused more on controlling 'public' sexual behaviour through legislation, than attacking 'private' sexual beliefs and practices.

36

Pall Mall Gazette (July 1885). A useful account of Stead's article, the passage of the acts and the formation of the N.V.A. can be found in Deborah Gorham, 'The 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' Re-Examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late-Victorian England', Victorian Studies (Spring 1978): 353-379.

37

All of the activities are outlined in William Alexander Coote, A Romance of Philanthropy (London: National Vigilance Association, 1916). Coote was the association's secretary.

38

Edward J. Bristow, Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700 (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), p. 117.

39

Walkowitz, History Workshop, p. 89.

40

Specifically she cites the work of J. Ellice Hopkins who tirelessly promoted the White Cross Army for men who pledged themselves to respect women and keep themselves pure. See Sheila Jeffreys, "Free From All Uninvited Touch of Man": Women's Campaigns Around Sexuality, 1880-1914', Women's Studies International Forum 5 no. 6 (1982), pp. 632-634. Also see Sheila Jeffreys, 'The Spinster and Her Enemies - Sexuality and the Last Wave of Feminism', Scarlet Women 13 pt. 2 [Women Only] (1981): 22-27. In the former article, she argues that the two main interpretations of social purity (i.e. Bristow's analysis of it as repression and Week's theory of moral panic) explain the involvement of men with the movement, rather than that of women.

41

The problem is raised by both Walkowitz, History Workshop and Barbara Taylor, 'Female Vice and Feminist Virtue', New Statesman (January 23, 1981): 16-17. Both raise the problems of contemporary feminist campaigns against pornography which find themselves allied with such anti-feminists as Mary Whitehouse in Britain, or the New Right Moral Majority in the United States.

42

It should be noted that this group has previously been analyzed as part of a late Victorian revolt which moved towards increasing sexual freedom, see Cominos, International Review of Social History, part 2. More recently feminists have rightly redressed the emphasis placed on this group, stressing that social purity was a much stronger movement. Here I do not want to return to Cominos' argument; instead I want to focus on this group as a minor alternative trend within mainstream late Victorian feminism.

43

This will be examined in further detail in the second section.

44

On the activities of the Pioneer Club, see 'The Pioneer Club', To-Day (September 8, 1894), pp. 132-133. Its activities were usually listed in the 'Concerning Women' column of the Woman's Signal, a feminist paper edited by Lady Henry Somerset and Annie E. Holdsworth. While the paper was most firmly aligned with social purity and temperance, it covered all events of general interest to women. For an example of the progressive subjects discussed at the Pioneer Club, consult Woman's Signal (April 11, 1895), p. 231.

45

Both 'The Woman's Question' and 'Socialism and Sex' were reprinted in Karl Pearson, The Ethic of Freethought: A Selection of Essays and Lectures (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1888), pp. 370-394, and pp. 427-446. For a helpful discussion of Pearson in the context of New Women's writing, see Lloyd Fernando, 'The Radical Ideology of the 'New Women'', Southern Review 2 (1967), pp. 210-212. Certainly Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling shared Pearson's view of people's innate tendency towards monogamy in their Woman Question (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Le Bas & Lowry, 1886); as did Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972 reprint of 1884 edition). All traced an historical development from primitive promiscuity to modern monogamy. It is significant that in all cases their sexual radicalism did not extend as far as accepting homosexuality.

46

Eleanor Marx's common-law relationship with Edward Aveling provides a case in point. See Yvonne Kapp, Eleanor Marx 2 vols. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972 & 1976).

47

Grant Allen, 'The New Hedonism', Fortnightly Review (March 1894), p. 379. This article was endlessly discussed in the popular press. Richard Le Gallienne took up Allen's arguments in a lecture at the Playgoer's Club which was reported in the Speaker - see 'The New Hedonism', Speaker (December 22, 1894): 686-687.

48

Allen, Fortnightly, p. 387.

49

Ibid., p. 391. Penny Boumelha, Thomas Hardy and Women (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 83-84 comments that the emphasis on union frequently undermined their fictional heroine's freedom. Relationships generally perpetuated the ideology of marriage being loving, lasting and monogamous.

50

Another mission of eugenic motherhood is recounted by Menie Muriel Dowie, Gallia (London: Methuen and Co., 1895).

51

Mona Caird, 'The Morality of Marriage', Fortnightly Review (March 1890), p. 323.

52

Ibid., p. 313.

53

Caird, Nineteenth Century, p. 826. She also articulated these views forcefully in her novel, The Daughters of Danaus (London:

Bliss, Sands & Foster, 1894), p. 187 where the heroine, Hadria, reflects: Throughout history,...children had been the unfailing means of bringing women into line with tradition. Who could stand against them? They had been able to force the most rebellious to their knees. An appeal to maternal instinct had quenched the hardiest spirit of revolt. No wonder women harbour dreams and plan insurrections; but their children - little ambassadors of the established and expected - were argument enough to convince even the most hardened skeptics. Their helplessness was more powerful to suppress revolt than regiments of armed soldiers.

54

Sarah Grand, 'The Pity of It', St. Paul's (March 1894), p. 22.

55

George Egerton, Keynotes and Discords (London: Virago, 1983 reprint of 1893 and 1894), p. 20. See the introduction to Egerton's work by Martha Vicinus in the same volume.

56

Although Egerton still believed in an essential femininity, it was decidedly more sexually active than the traditionally espoused feminine ideal. In many respects, Egerton's views seem to have foreshadowed those of twentieth century radical feminists in that she felt women were innately superior to men, see her comments in 'How to Court the Advanced Woman', Idler (September 1894), pp. 194-196.

57

'The Author of "Keynotes"', Sketch (March 28, 1894), p. 446.

58

For an excellent general introduction to these works see Penny Boumelha, Hardy, ch. 4 'Women and the New Fiction 1880-1900'. She notes that prostitution was the central theme in Annie E. Holdsworth, Joanna Trail, Spinster (1894) and Arabella Kenealy, The Honourable Mrs. Spoor [1895]; rape in George Moore, A Mere Accident (1887) and [Edith Johnstone], A Sunless Heart (1894); adultery in George Slythe Street, Episodes (1895) and George Meredith, One of our Conquerors (1891); divorce in Meredith, Diana of the Crossways (1885) and George Egerton, 'A Little Grey Glove' in Keynotes (1893); and venereal disease in Sarah Grand, The Heavenly Twins (1893). It should be noted that a few of these books were written by anti-feminists offering different solutions from the majority of New Women writers (e.g. Arabella Kenealy and 'Iota'). Like anti-suffragists these women found themselves awkwardly obliged to tackle issues which feminine women were not supposedly to know about, let alone discuss publicly.

59

The Philistine [J.A. Sterry], The New Fiction (A Protest Against

Sex Mania) (London: Westminster Gazette Office, 1895), p. 91.

60

Blanche Crackanthorpe, 'Sex in Modern Literature', Nineteenth Century (April 1895): 607-615; James Ashcroft Noble, 'The Fiction of Sexuality', Contemporary Review (April 1895): 490-498; and D.F. Hannigan, 'Sex in Fiction', Westminster Review 143 (1895): 616-625.

61

W.T. Stead, 'The Novel of the Modern Woman', Review of Reviews 10 (1894), p. 64.

62

Hugh E.M. Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics', Blackwood's Magazine (June 1895), p. 844.

63

The New Drama will be discussed in the third section.

64

This is only a tentative suggestion based on available information for the few individuals involved in this study. The social status of actresses will be examined further in the third section.

65

Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 'The Woman Who Did', Contemporary Review 67 (May 1895), p. 630.

66

Elizabeth Chapman, Marriage Questions in Modern Fiction and Other Essays (London: John Lane, 1897), p. 25.

67

This was cited in a literary column entitled 'The Position of Women: Novelists on the Eternal Question', Weekly Sun (October 28, 1894), p. 16.

68

Cited in J.A. and Olive Banks, Feminism and Family Planning (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 104-105.

69

For a typical example of this type of humour, consult 'Private Views: Mrs. Grundy Sees a Little Life', To-Day (February 24, 1894), p. 73.

70

An interesting discussion of this issue can be found in Rosamund Billington, 'Ideology and Feminism: Why the Suffragettes were 'Wild Women'', Women's Studies International Forum 5 no. 6 (1982): 663-674.

71

Two typical examples include George Egerton and Mrs. Ormiston Chant. Occasionally the term was used by the women themselves as a positive aspect of self-definition. For example, see Mary Bedford's poem, 'The New Woman', Woman's Signal (January 10, 1895), p. 26. The opening and closing lines were:

Oh, misused name of party strife
When wordy arguments are rife
You should be put to nobler use
Than as a term of mere abuse....

We'll even try the world to mend,
And be "New Women" to the end.

72

Contemporaries frequently found it necessary to distinguish between the two senses of the term. See M. Eastwood, 'The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact', Humanitarian 5 (November 1894): 375-379. This article, written by a social purity feminist claimed that they were the real New Women. It seems worth noting that many feminist histories of the period seem to have accepted such statements at face value - largely ignoring the writers and actresses of the 1890s who believed in women's rights but were totally opposed to social purity.

73

Du Maurier's conservative, male chauvinist humour can be found in virtually all of his cartoons which appear here (i.e. figs. 5, 13, 17, 21, 33, 41, 102, 130, and 131). For further information on his traditional views, consult Leonee Ormond, George Du Maurier (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

74

For a fascinating account of the cycling craze of the 90s, including a discussion of its impact on women's rights, see David Rubenstein, 'Cycling in the 1890s', Victorian Studies (Autumn 1977): 47-71.

75

A lengthy contemporary article assessing which sports were suitable for women is T.P. White, 'Modern Mannish Maidens', Blackwood's Magazine 147 (February 1890): 252-264.

76

The symbol of the latchkey seems to have especially worried anti-feminists - consult Lynn Linton, 'The Feminine Latchkey', To-Day (July 7, 1894): 262-263.

77

B.A. Crackanthorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', Nineteenth Century (January 1894): 23-31; B.A. Crackanthorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters: A Last Word on the Revolt', Nineteenth Century (March 1894):

424-429; M.E. Haweis, 'The Revolt of the Daughters: Daughters and Mothers,' Nineteenth Century (March, 1894): 430-436; Kathleen Cuffe, 'A Reply from the Daughters', Nineteenth Century (March 1894): 437-442; Alys W. Pearsall Smith, 'A Reply from the Daughters', Nineteenth Century (March 1894): 443-450; Sarah M. Amos, 'The Evolution of the Daughters', Contemporary Review (April 1894): 515-520; May Jeune, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', Fortnightly Review (February, 1894): 267-276; 'Mothers and Daughters', Speaker (January 6, 1894): 14-16; and 'Letters to the Editor: Revolt of the Daughters', Speaker (January 20, 1894): 74-75.

78

It is impossible to imagine a march of male trade unionists being represented in the same way. They would not have been dismissed with amusement as 'Our Workers'.

79

Gertrude Atherton, 'The Unbeautiful New Woman', Vanity Fair (October 18, 1894), p. 266.

80

A typical example is [S.H. Scott and Evelyn Beatrice Hall], 'Character Note: the New Woman', Cornhill Magazine (October 1894): 365-368. Even more vindictive was the popular form of anecdote or rhyme in which a dissatisfied woman is miraculously transformed into a super-brain who men naturally reject. Becoming desparately unhappy she is returned to her old state and lives happily ever after. See 'A Dream of the New Woman', Punch (January 12, 1895), p. 17; and Florence Hoare, 'Emancipated Woman', Woman (October 17, 1894), pp. 5-6.

81

Stutfield, Blackwood's, p. 840. Stutfield cited the Speaker as claiming New Women were creations of Oscar Wilde.

82

At times various New Women novelists also claimed that she was the product of journalists. In these cases, however, it seems to have been a way of disassociating themselves from the caricature versions of her I discussed in the previous section. An example of this is George Egerton's comments in 'Advanced Woman', Idler, p. 195 - '...I do not quite know what the term "Advanced Woman" implies; to me it is a puff-ball of a word I see in newspapers'.

83

A Feminine Fossil, 'The New Woman on the Brain', Woman (June 6, 1894) p. 3.

84

'Of the New Woman', Vanity Fair (October 18, 1894), p. 265.

85

See also resemblances in facial type to a drawing by Mortarthurio

Whiskersley in Punch (October 27, 1894), p. 204, and also to Beardsley's own illustration for the article 'Advanced Woman', Idler, p. 192 (fig. 20).

86
'Advanced Woman', Idler, p. 196.

87
Ibid., p. 209.

88
Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', Nineteenth Century Fiction 33 (March 1979), pp. 434-453.

89
Interestingly the woman's magazine, Queen liked the picture, although the reviewer only mentioned it very briefly and did not comment on the incongruous setting, see Queen (April 21, 1894), p. 268. A similar response appeared in the St. James Gazette (April 18, 1894), p. 15.

90
To-Day (April 28, 1894), p. 370.

91
Philip Gilbert Hamerton, 'The Yellow Book: A Criticism of Volume I', Yellow Book (July, 1894), p. 187.

92
World (April 25, 1894), p. 26.

93
Pall Mall Budget (May 3, 1894), p. 20. Also reproduced in The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley. Edited by Henry Maas, J.L. Duncan and W.G. Good. (London: Cassell, 1970), p. 68.

94
Ibid.

95
This is one of the central dilemmas of Hadria Fullerton, the heroine of Mona Caird's The Daughters of Danaus (1894). Hadria, very unusually leaves her husband and goes off to Paris to study composition, but is ultimately thwarted from pursuing her musical career due to her mother's illness.

96
James Walvin, Leisure and Society 1830-1950 (London: Longmans, 1978), p. 109. Walvin mentions that survey workers for Charles Booth noticed a wall advertisement in a poor working-class community that read 'What is home without a piano?' On the piano as a drawing-room fixture,

see 'Awards in 'The Studio' Prize Competitions : A Cottage Pianoforte Case', Studio 2 (1894): 255-227.

97

For a useful discussion of the piano as a female accomplishment see Arthur Loesser, Men, Women and Pianos (London: Victor Gollancz, 1955), pp. 267-279.

98

Walvin, Leisure, p. 108.

99

Rupert Hart-Davis, Max Beerbohm: Letters to Reggie Turner (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), p. 92.

100

Verdicts on the work were generally mixed. For several critics who found the work humorous but slightly offensive at the same time, see Academy (April 28, 1894), p. 349; Daily Chronicle (April 16, 1894), p. 3; Globe (April 16, 1894), p. 6; Queen (April 12, 1894), p. 628; and Whitehall Review (April 28, 1894), p. 13. Other critics simply ruled that the subject made the work offensive per se - see St. James Budget (April 20, 1894), p. 4, and Speaker (April 28, 1894), p. 469. Only the Weekly Irish Times unreservedly liked the piece, and this article has been attributed to Katherine Tynan, a member of the Bodley Head circle.

101

Comic music-hall turns of the period frequently played on female sexual awareness - a well known example being Marie Lloyd's suggestive songs including 'Keep off the Grass' and 'Then You Wink the Other Eye'. See D.F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Great Britain (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974), p. 73.

102

Globe (April 16, 1894), p. 6.

103

Whitehall Review (April 28, 1894), p. 13.

104

Speaker (April 28, 1894), p. 469. Symon's poem sentimentally described his memories of a particular prostitute.

105

Another Yellow Book critic remarked that the background of 'A Night Piece'... resembled nothing so much as the lower half of a burnt-out factory' - World (April 25, 1894), p. 26.

106

Linton, To-Day, p. 263.

107 'The Quarterly on the "New Woman"', St. James Gazette (October 17, 1894), p. 4.

108 An example of the French Revolutionary analogy can be found in William Barry, 'The Strike of a Sex', Quarterly Review 179 (1894), pp. 289-293; and a case of moral anarchy appears in 'Socio-literary Portents', Speaker (December 22, 1894), pp. 683-684.

109 This was widely reported in virtually all dailies and weeklies during the summer months.

110 For example, see Chapman, Marriage Questions, pp. 3-5.

111 The Philistine, New Fiction, pp. 83-84.

112 Photographs of the Empire Theatre from the 1890s indicate that its facade remained largely unaltered. Consult R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, The Lost Theatres of London (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), pl. 11 which is a photograph from 1895.

113 Mrs. Ormiston Chant, Why We Attacked the Empire (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1894), and "The Empire" - The Decline and Fall', Sketch (October 31, 1894), p. 8.

114 Cheshire, Music Hall, p. 38.

115 For example, see the sheer volume of letters in the Daily Telegraph on the subject from October 13 - 19, 1894 when the outrage seems to have peaked, although it continued to be discussed much longer.

116 For an account of the fervour surrounding the closing of the old Empire (before modification) see 'The Empire Licence', St. James Gazette (October 27, 1894), pp. 9-10. A useful twentieth century analysis of the crisis is Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900', Journal of Social History 7 (Summer, 1974), pp. 494-497.

117 Brian Reade, Aubrey Beardsley (New York: Bonanza Books, 1967), p. 351. It was published under the first title in A Second Book of Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley (London: L. Smithers, 1899), p. 115.

Although in the introduction, Smithers claims that the works in the collection are all early dating from 1889-1890, he is a notoriously inaccurate source. This drawing is stylistically much closer to Beardsley's work from 1894-1895 in terms of the woman's 18th century hair-style and facial mole, and also the minutely intricate floral clusters on her dress. It is very similar to Beardsley's frontispiece for John Davidson's Earl of Lavender (1895), but not so detailed as his full-blown 18th century style in the Rape of the Lock illustrations of 1896.

118

For instance, in an interview in the Westminster Budget (October 26, 1894), p. 753, Mrs. Chant claimed:

I don't object to tights, as such. I know that when you dance very vigorously you must not be impeded by clinging petticoats about your ankles, or even about the knees. If need be, I think I could devise a costume which would give this freeness and yet clothe the limbs, although I am not one of those who think it a shame to have legs. It is the motive at the back of it all, the obvious suggestiveness which makes the thing evil. When you know that the tights are but the medium whereby the bodies of women are exposed for the inspection of the libertine and the roue, then the thing is bad and wrong.

119

See L. Raven-Hill's album entitled The Promenaders (London: "Pick-Me-Up" Office, [1894]) which featured 22 full page cartoons on the subject.

120

Consult the letter from 'A Christian' in the Daily Telegraph urging that the campaign to purify the Empire be extended to most other west-end theatres. This is discussed in connection with Beardsley's illustration of 'La Dame Aux Camelias' in the third section.

121

For instance, the World and the Westminster Budget seem to have been more outraged than the St. James Gazette, but these subtle distinctions were far outweighed by the basically hostile consensus.

122

Beardsley's contemporaries frequently complained about the Pick-Me-Up qualities of his Yellow Book illustrations. The Academy's accusation that the cover of the first volume was rejected from the offices of Pick-Me-Up is discussed in the fourth section; while Margaret Armour's comments in an article on Beardsley, condemning the Yellow Book as a glorified version of Pick-Me-Up are examined in the third section. Finally the prosecution of Pick-Me-Up for indecency is analyzed in the section section.

123

This problem has been recognized by Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (London: Quartet, 1977), ch. 7 'Lesbianism and the Position of Women'.

124

Reade, Beardsley, pp. 345-346.

125

Caesar Lombroso and William Ferrero, The Female Offender (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895). This was a translation of the original Italian edition of 1893. It was the first of a criminology series edited by W. Douglas Morrison. See Morrison's introduction cataloguing these congenital defects, pp. xv-xvi.

126

This is discussed by Kate Flint, 'Moral Judgement and the Language of English Art Criticism 1870 - 1910', Oxford Art Journal 6 no. 2 (1983), pp. 63-64.

127

Havelock Ellis, The Criminal (London: Walter Scott, 1890). Ellis mentions in his introduction how much he owes to the work of such other researchers in the field as Lombroso and Kraft-Ebing.

128

Ellis, Criminal, pp. 176-193. It is interesting to note that in his discussion of criminal art Ellis included the 'decadent' writings of Paul Verlaine, specifically mentioning his Fetes Galantes which Beardsley subsequently referred to his second version of 'The Toilet of Salome' (fig.75) which is discussed in the third section. Ellis' characterization of prison art bears many remarkable resemblances to certain verdicts passed on Beardsley's work:

Scenes of murder or robbery, lawcourts, men hanging from gallows, women, mostly nude, with huge or pendent breasts, men or women in extravagantly perverse sexual attitudes - these are the visions which come to the criminal in prison,...Sexual imagery, not beautiful but gross and ugly, undoubtedly has the chief part in these designs;...(p. 191)

129

National Observer (April 21, 1894), p. 588.

130

Daily Chronicle (July 12, 1894), p. 3.

131

Ellis, Criminal, p. 80.

132

Lombroso and Ferrero, Female Offender, p. 114.

133

Dorland's Pocket Medical Dictionary 22nd edition (London: W.B. Saunders, 1977), p. 737. Xanth(o), a pathological term for yellow was used in a variety of forms throughout the review.

134

National Observer (November 17, 1894), p. 23.

135

Globe (July 21, 1894), p. 6.

136

National Observer (July 18, 1894), p. 359.

137

Weeks, Coming Out, p. 87.

138

Nicholas Green and Frank Mort, 'Visual Representation and Cultural Politics', Block 7 (1982), p. 65.

139

Daily Chronicle (July 12, 1894), p. 3.

140

For a helpful treatment of these issues in the context of art criticism, see Flint, Oxford Art Journal, p. 64.

141

In addition to a number of physical anomalies, W. Douglas Morrison noted: 'We have also sexual peculiarities, such as feminism in men, masculinism in women, and infantilism in both.' Lombroso and Ferrero, Female Offender, pp. xv-xvi.

142

A typical interview exploring these aspects in detail is Arthur H. Lawrence, 'Mr. Beardsley and His Work', Idler (March 1897): 98-111.

143

Pelican (April 21, 1894), p. 3.

144

'The New Master of Art: Mr. Aubrey Beardsley', To-Day (May 12, 1894), p. 28.

145

The phenomenon of self-advertisement is explored further in the

next section which looks at Beardsley's work in the context of the literary market-place.

146

Public Opinion (November 24, 1893), p. 660.

Section Two: The Yellow Book's Location in the Literary

Market-Place of 1894-1895

In my view, Fraser Harrison has correctly identified the most serious problem with the majority of research on the 1890s in general, and the Yellow Book in particular:

A curious feature of critical and biographical writing devoted to the arts of the period is that the surrounding historical landscape is often obscured, even obliterated.....

The Yellow Book has suffered a similar fate: isolating it from its literary and publishing context, critics have tended to regard it solely as a product of the decadent movement.(1)

This 'decadent' movement presented in isolation sheds little light on the broader conditions of production and reception in the publishing industry during 1894 - 1895 which determined the shape of the Yellow Book and set the limits to the radical interventions that I will be arguing the magazine achieved. Therefore, essential to this task of analyzing the public response to the imagery of New Women which appeared in the first four volumes of the Yellow Book is the location of this periodical in the literary market-place of 1894-1895.

This section will involve a series of progressively widening investigations. It will start by looking at Beardsley's role as a publisher's illustrator during the mid-1890s emphasizing his connection with the New Fiction. Then the launching of the magazine's first issue will be considered. Here its precise format will be examined in the

context of the activities of its publisher, John Lane of the Bodley Head. Special attention will be paid to the Yellow Book's fulfilment of the Bodley Head's desired objectives, above and beyond the obvious goal of making a healthy profit. Important information concerning the company's intentions can be gathered from research into the concerted advertising and publicity campaign mounted by the publisher and editors to stimulate public interest and sales. This brings me to the crucial problem of identifying the Yellow Book's public - a complicated concept which must be broken down into several components: first, the imaginary public which the publisher and editors had in mind when producing the magazine; second, the possible addressees, meaning that sector of society that could afford to purchase privately or at least borrow copies of the Yellow Book from a circulating library; and finally, the actual purchasers and readers, which is the most problematic of the three categories in terms of finding reliable information. In the formation of reasonable hypotheses about this third category of actual purchasers and readers, the Bodley Head's system of book distribution provides some assistance.

It should be noted that any consideration of the magazine's public must be firmly situated in the complicated conjuncture of the British publishing industry in 1894. After decades of structural stability, the industry was experiencing a major crisis initiated by the collapse of the three volume novel which in turn led to the complete restructuring of book formats and distribution methods, and a dramatic lowering of prices. The chaotic state of the publishing industry seems to have led to some unexpected results as far as the Yellow Book was concerned - one of

which, as I shall argue, was the extent of the magazine's readership. In this respect the importance of the venture as a spectacle for certain classes of suburban consumers is especially relevant. Finally this section will conclude with an examination of the prosecution of Pick-Me-Up, a contemporary illustrated magazine, that was accused of indecency in 1894. The trial which helped to establish the normative contours for the visual representation of sexuality during this period indicates some of the problems associated with the simple identification of Beardsley's illustrations as pornographic.

I Beardsley as a Publisher's Illustrator

Recalling Beardsley's work, his contemporary, Arthur Symons, observed:

His career was remarkable in many ways; but one, and for us the most significant, has been overlooked by his commentators. Beardsley, was, more than any artist of modern times, the creature of the printed book. He held no exhibitions; his drawings were created not so much to be beautiful in themselves (though they are that) but to be beautiful in reproduction; and apart from such trifles as Christmas cards and posters, his works were specifically intended for use as covers, title-pages, illustrations or embellishments to books. This is a claim which could hardly be made of any other recent artist, and certainly of no other of equal ability. Ricketts, Morris, Rosetti, Millais, these and many others have played distinguished parts in the evolution of the book; to each of these such work was a diversion from their greater labours; of none of them could it be said that their buying public was the publisher. Yet it is entirely true of Beardsley,...(2)

Although Symons was unduly preoccupied with the notion of 'high art' which made him incorrectly characterize Beardsley as a solitary genius, he

noticed what other writers seem to have ignored, namely Beardsley's heavy dependence on the publishing industry. It was a dependence shared by a growing number of illustrators during the 1890s, including Dudley Hardy, Phil May and Leonard Raven-Hill to name just a few.³

This type of highly specialized illustrator was a relatively new phenomenon that had emerged during the 1880s with the technical innovation of mechanical photographic engraving. Replacing the older, more cumbersome practice of using hand-engraved wooden blocks, the new process significantly reduced labour, lowered costs, increased accuracy and speeded up the entire procedure.⁴ Joseph Pennell, a nineteenth century authority on the subject, explained how it worked:

For in the mechanically engraved process block, to use the ordinary term, the lines made by the artist on paper, are photographed directly on to the metal plate; these lines are protected by ink which is rolled upon them with an ordinary ink roller, the sticky ink adhering to the lines of the photograph, and nowhere else. This ink photograph is then placed in a bath of acid, and the exposed portions are eaten away; the zinc or other metal block is set up with a wooden back type-high, and is ready to print from. The process is so ridiculously simple that it can be done in a very few hours.⁽⁵⁾

Firms specializing in 'process' reproduction such as Carl Hentschel and the Swan Electric Engraving Company which handled Beardsley's illustrations, sprang into existence.⁶ This in turn presented new opportunities for pen-and-ink artists who could now offer their services directly to the publisher, instead of working through the intermediary of an engraver. In fact, many engraving firms went bankrupt during this period, including the well known Dalziel Brothers in 1893 who in the past had supplied numerous blocks for Punch.⁷ An article in the British Printer of 1897

summed up the impact of process commenting that high-class wood engraving was scarcely ever seen in either illustrated weeklies or monthly magazines. Even such resistant vehicles as the Graphic, Punch, Illustrated London News and Black and White had largely succumbed to the new technique.⁸

Publishing was definitely the major market for relief prints since few exhibitions and dealers were seriously interested in such work during the 1890s. In exhibitions, they were ususally overshadowed by larger, more impressive, oil paintings, and dealers evidently preferred handling etchings and watercolours.⁹ Working in the publishing industry meant that illustrators generally had a different and frequently wider public compared to that of painters. In fact many writers of the 1890s got rather carried away by the democratic implications of illustration. Addressing the aspiring illustrator in his handbook on pen drawing of 1894, Pennell commented '...you should be prouder to illustrate the greatest magazines of the world, thus appealing to millions of readers, than have your drawings buried in the portfolios of a few hundred collectors'.¹⁰ Of course the number of readers addressed depended on the nature of the book, magazine or newspaper that was being illustrated.

Mass reproduction seems to have played a significant role in the concept of the New Art. Significantly it was illustration and poster designing that were considered its most characteristic manifestations. Traditional critics castigated the ephemeral nature of the mediums and the fact that such work was viewed directly by the general public rather than

mediated by exhibition juries, dealers or art critics. In contrast, this was precisely what proved appealing for its practitioners. As Beardsley commented in an interview of July 1894:

...may not our hoardings claim kinship with the galleries, and designers of affiches pose as proudly in the public as the masters of Holland Road or Bond Street Barbizon (and, recollect, no gate money, no catalogue)?
(11)

Such democratising tendencies, however, were still largely monopolized by men. Surprisingly the new line block process did not seem to encourage any significant growth in the small number of female illustrators. Instead their work remained marginalized in the women's press or children's books. Their conspicuous absence from mainstream graphic work was noticed by Pennell:

It is very curious that women who are artists have not more generally taken to illustration; it is just possible, however, that it is because illustration is not so easy as it seems...It is rather curious that more women have not made the designing of fashion plates their study.(12)

Here one assumes that the force of tradition as well as a lack of technical experience (which made even the simple line block process seem inaccessible) prevented women from illustrating on a scale comparable to their growing literary production.¹³

In Beardsley's case, virtually all of his income was derived from publishing commissions, although he occasionally sold a few drawings to friends. It was a £250 contract from J.M. Dent for the Le Morte d'Arthur illustrations that initially enabled Beardsley to leave his clerical position in the Guardian Fire and Life Assurance office to become a

professional graphic artist.¹⁴ Most of his income was precariously earned from limited contracts as his frequent reference to business transactions in his correspondence demonstrates. After abandoning his clerkship in 1892, his first steady salary came from the art editorship of the Yellow Book during 1894. According to the contract between the publishers, Mathews and Lane, and the editors, Harland and Beardsley, the former agreed to pay the latter a commission on the basis of sales. This basically amounted to approximately £175 for an edition of five thousand. The payment operated on a sliding scale of 10% for the first thousand copies, 15% for the second through to fifth thousand, and 20% for copies exceeding five thousand.¹⁵ While there is considerable evidence that Harland ploughed much of his salary back into the Yellow Book, using it on stationary, postal expenses and paying his secretary, Ella D'Arcy, Beardsley seems to have depended on his salary.¹⁶ In fact, after his dismissal from the Yellow Book when a number of other publishers also dropped him, he and his family were forced to give up their house at 114 Cambridge Street in Pimlico which they had occupied since the summer of 1893.¹⁷ As a recent Beardsley biographer has observed, 'the bottom had been blown out of the market for his labour'.¹⁸ Perennial financial insecurity necessarily kept Beardsley acutely aware of his public value.

II The Yellow Book as a Bodley Head Production

On April 16, 1894 the Bodley Head released the first volume of the Yellow Book. Within days this action became a significant social event,

as an anonymous writer for the National Observer pointed out:

On Monday the great world did Messrs. Mathews and Lane, publishers, the honour to creak on its hinges: for it had been foretold that on that day a new planet; a star of modernity, a yellow asteroid, in fact - would swim into the ken of the nation which hitherto had sat in a most lamentable darkness. Never was the way of a magazine made so plain before it as The Yellow Book's: judicious advertisements planted and injudicious interviews watered....But the world took the cue submissively, and awaited the advent of The Yellow Book in an attitude of reverent expectation. Now we have it: you can see men going home from their labour in the city bearing the work deferentially under their arms: it flames from the forehead of many an 'occasional table' in Brixton and Bayswater.(19)

Stimulated by extensive discussion in the press and carefully planned advertising, certain people rushed out to purchase Yellow Books. After the first edition of five thousand copies were exhausted in five days, the publisher hastily rushed out a second and third edition to eager buyers.²⁰

What was this Yellow Book? Considering the extensive discussion of this very issue by the magazine's contemporaries and subsequent generations of critics and historians, one might be tempted to consider this a rhetorical question. Nevertheless, briefly reviewing the more salient points of this well trodden ground for the umpteenth time seems justified, in order place this information in a new framework.

The Yellow Book was a small (i.e. approximately 8 1/4 x 6 1/4 inches) quarterly magazine composed solely of 'Literature' and 'Art', the former edited by Henry Harland and the latter by Aubrey Beardsley.²¹

Each volume consisted of around two hundred and fifty pages which included

from fifteen to twenty black and white plates, and literary entries of different lengths, usually short stories, poetry and essays. The images did not illustrate the texts, but rather each was given separate treatment and equal emphasis. The magazine contained no news, nor discussions of current affairs, and the only advertisements accepted were publisher's lists which were relegated to a few pages at the end of each volume.

Despite the fact that the magazine utilized mass production processes (i.e. the type was set on linotype, and the illustrations were line blocks), the format was as luxurious as possible for the price of five shillings. A new cover illustration consisting of a black design printed on yellow cloth boards was produced for each issue. Specially textured (albeit machine made) paper, uncut pages, and the use of a large sized Caslon old-face type all added to the magazine's visual appeal. Strikingly simple title-pages, headings set half way down pages, fly titles preceeding each plate, and the archaic use of catchwords also reinforced the appearance of the magazine as a collector's item.

This luxury at low cost format of the Yellow Book was a hallmark of Bodley Head publications during the early nineties.²² The partnership of Elkin Mathews and John Lane which formed the Bodley Head in 1889, consisted of an antiquarian and specialty bookshop at 6B Vigo Street and a small but steadily increasing publishing operation. It was Lane who primarily ran the publishing side of the business that specialized in short books (aproximately 128 pages or less) of limited editions (usually 550 or less) that were of superior quality in terms of typesetting,

binding, title-pages, illustrations, and paper to the standard books from the large commercial publishing houses.²³ The Bodley Head mainly issued poetry, plays, essays, and short stories by young authors (e.g. Richard LeGallienne, John Davidson, George Egerton, Ella D'Arcy), rather than by writers of established reputations, although there were a few well known exceptions (e.g. Oscar Wilde). This general policy seems to have prevailed for two reasons: first was Lane's own interest in modern writing and the promotion of undiscovered talent, and second that profitable deals could be secured with inexperienced writers who were anxious to have their works published. Ample evidence reveals that Lane drove very hard bargains with his authors.²⁴

If Lane economized by publishing unknown authors, he also fully exploited the production advantages of the small limited edition, cutting costs by using larger than average typesets which looked impressive and were cheaper to set, buying up remainders of fine paper, and reducing binding quality, but not appearance.²⁵ The result was affordable luxury which attracted a new type of collector, as the St. James Gazette pointed out:

To Messrs. Elkin Mathews and John Lane almost more than to any other, are the thanks of the grateful singer especially due; for it is they who have managed to, by means of limited editions and charming workmanship, to impress book buyers with the belief that a volume may have an aesthetic and commercial value. They have made it possible to speculate in the latest discovered poet, as in a new company, - with the difference that an operation in the former can be done with three half crowns. (26)

The precise question of who could afford such items will be explored after

I have looked at the benefits that the Yellow Book provided for the Bodley Head, and the advertising strategy that was used to market the magazine.

The successful marketing of little-known authors was a difficult venture that required two integrally related skills: the ability to gauge what would appeal to one's market, and the effective promotion of one's authors as desirable commodities. Richard LeGallienne, the Bodley Head's chief reader, admirably fulfilled the first requirement, almost always selecting authors who more than repaid the company's initial investments.²⁷ In terms of the second necessity of promotion, John Lane seems to have been particularly shrewd, as his apprentice J.L. May later recalled, 'Lane, if anyone,...knew how to stimulate desire where it already existed, and how to create it where it did not.'²⁸ In some respects, the Yellow Book must be considered an extension of Lane's carefully managed publicity programme, as R.D. Brown has noted:

The Yellow Book...was apparently one more device to keep Lane's authors on public exhibition. Except for the 'name' writers who were included in each issue, most of the contributors to the magazine figure in the book lists of the Bodley Head. It's yellow, book-like format, it's lack of advertisements, and its Beardsley designs helped to put down the thought that it was a 'house organ'.⁽²⁹⁾

Certainly most publishers in the nineties printed such house organs for advertising purposes (e.g. Tinsley's Magazine, Macmillan's Magazine, Bentley's London Society).³⁰ However, such magazines were usually much less ambitious, priced in the one shilling range, smaller and without illustrations.

The more expensive format of the Yellow Book seems to have been a logical outcome of the Bodley Head's reputation for 'belles lettres', and the company's particular need to maintain a high public profile. The necessity for publicity stemmed from their position as a recently formed company that had to establish an identity and niche in the market, and also as the producer of books that were sold as individual units directly to the public. The Bodley Head did not act as a supplier of institutional volumes in series (e.g. school texts, novels for circulating libraries) which provided a more stable source of income to many other publishing houses.

It should be noted that the benefits of the Yellow Book were not only promotional. It also provided Lane with a means of testing the waters for any up and coming authors he may have been considering publishing in book form. The case of Ella D'Arcy provides a good illustration. Previously having published a couple of short stories in Blackwood's Magazine and Temple Bar, her career was not really launched until she had been favourably received by a substantial number of Yellow Book reviewers. By October 1894, after D'Arcy had contributed successful short stories to the first two issues of the quarterly, Lane decided to publish a volume of her short stories, although Monochromes was not to appear until June 1895.³¹

Although Lane was primarily interested in promoting his group of Bodley Head writers, it should be noted that they were not all unknowns (e.g. William Watson), nor the only writers to be featured in the Yellow

Book. The contributions of young writers were carefully balanced by the inclusion of those by authors of more established reputations (e.g. Henry James, Arthur Waugh, George Saintsbury). In fact, great pains were taken to include a number of serious essays by acknowledged literary scholars.³² This was probably to give the venture and Lane's writers general credibility, and perhaps to expand the magazine's potential audience, a point which will be examined in further detail in a moment.


III Promotion of the Periodical

While the Yellow Book offered certain advantages to its publisher, it could not have succeeded without its buyers also perceiving that they were getting their money's worth. Part of this perception was manipulated by an intensive advertising campaign which did not pass unnoticed by a number of contemporary critics. The Whitehall Review used the words 'well boomed', while the Spectator wrote mockingly:

Flourishes of trumpets heralded a forthcoming publication, modest preliminary puffs such as the following, "The most interesting, unusual, and important publication of its kind that has ever been undertaken," epithets such as "nearly perfect", "modern and distinguished", "charming", and "daring", were freely disseminated, and once more our hopes were raised,-...(33)

Although Lane's overall advertising budget for the Yellow Book could not have been large compared with those of the established publishing firms, judging from the response of his contemporaries, he seems to have maximized the available resources.

The methods used to promote the periodical were standard, simple, and effective.³⁴ First Lane circulated a prospectus soliciting subscribers among his Vigo Street clientele (fig. 39). This was followed by press notices announcing the date of publication and free availability of the prospectus. A poster designed by Beardsley to be displayed by booksellers, announcing them as agents of the Yellow Book, provided additional publicity (fig.40). Next came more press announcements and a timely interview with the magazine's editors in the Sketch. The already high public profile of the editors, particularly Beardsley, helped to fuel interest.

Evidently Beardsley's distinctive style, perhaps best typified by his flamboyant  signature, provided Lane with a readily identifiable product. Certainly his prior association with advanced causes helped to attract attention. In 1894 using Beardsley's work was the equivalent of flying New Literary colours. It seems worth noting that during the nineties the editor of the staid Quarterly Review, R. E. Prothero, felt that it was impossible for him to employ Beardsley:

It would have amused me to bring out the next number of the Review with one of Beardsley's women smirking on the cover. But even if I could obtain John Murray's consent, I was well aware that such a course would outrage the old subscribers,...(34)

Several critics accused Lane of simply using Beardsley as a sensational sales booster. The Daily Chronicle typically complained, 'Some day Mr. Lane will discover that his interesting venture is handicapped by the repulsive and wholly uninteresting drawings now that their value as an advertisement is exhausted.'³⁶ Similarly the St. James Budget felt

that the only reason the publisher kept Beardsley's contributions in the third issue was 'because they think that the curiosity of the public concerning him has not yet died out.'³⁷

Finally and perhaps most important of all were the numerous controversial press reviews that greeted the quarterly's appearance. As a writer in To-Day observed, '...The Yellow Book has been talked about and abused, and, so as far as sales are concerned, what better thing could have happened to it'.³⁸ Following his unusual practice, Lane saved these reviews and recycled them in his own advertising. It was a strategy which he had developed to a fine art finding that particularly abusive reviews attracted tremendous publicity. There is considerable evidence that the literary establishment found Lane's sensationalism highly objectionable because it undermined their criticisms of the New Literature by making martyrs out of its writers. 'The Philistine' [J.A. Sterry] of the Westminster Gazette complained:

...the "Martyr to Art" positively revels in his martyrdom, and his case is such that you can only attack him in terms which increase his vogue with a certain section of the public. So well is this appreciated by certain publishers that they are now in the habit of selecting the darkest expressions of disapproval from an unfavourable notice of a book, and deliberately printing it in their next advertisements. Thus if a reviewer says that the book is "loathsome", "nasty", or even "unwholesome", he may count on seeing that opinion set out in a prominent place among the notices which commend that book to the attention of the reader.(39)

Realizing only too well that the unnamed publisher referred to himself, John Lane responded with a letter to the editor. Citing the specific examples of philistine critics deliberately misreading works by George

Egerton and Arthur Machen, Lane argued he found it necessary to redress such abuses:

...he ['The Philistine'] comments on my advertisement of abusive press notices, for although my name is not mentioned there can be no mistake as to the intention. But what would he have me do? What other means are open to me of pillorying the ignorant, the biased, and the malicious reviewer, than to contrast publicly their utterances, and those of the writers, far outnumbering them, who express totally contrary convictions.(40)

Punch could not resist caricaturing the situation in the "Sexo-Mania" of 1895 (fig. 41) which supported 'The Philistine's' attack by exposing the publisher's mercenary motives. Both the title and the Parthenon's description of the book, made clear that this is a New Woman writer who is portrayed as the publisher's dupe.

At this point it is worth turning to examine the claims advanced for the product. The prospectus was designed to convey the appearance of the future magazine as it clearly stated:

The present announcement shows the size and shape of the paper (now being especially woven) on which it will be printed, as well as the type that will be used, and the proportion of text and margin. (41)

The three pages of prospectus text were enclosed in yellow covers with a design by Beardsley on the front cover (fig. 39). Inside was a list of contributors, a statement of intent, information about the release date and price, and a detachable subscription form. The exclusion of serialized fiction and advertising from the magazine was carefully pointed out. Essentially four positive features of the new quarterly were stressed in the prospectus advertising: originality, modernity, daringness, and ultimately its value for book collectors. It was the last

point that received the most emphasis:

It [the Yellow Book] will be charming, it will be daring, it will be distinguished. It will be a book - book to be read, and placed upon one's shelves, and read again; a book in form, a book in substance; a book beautiful to see and convenient to handle; a book with style, a book with finish; a book that every book-lover will love at first sight; a book that will make book-lovers of many who are now indifferent to books.(42)

The word book repeated twelve times in the last sentence simply leaps off the page. If nothing else, one was convinced one was making a permanent investment in a book, and not buying a disposable periodical that would be superseded by the next issue.

This deliberate play on the magazine's resemblance to a book (both in its title and format) seems to have been part of a strategy to justify its expense. Evidently this ploy worked to some extent judging from the confusion reviewers experienced - in some instances discussing the quarterly with other magazines and in others placing it in regular book review columns. The reviewer of Queen, a ladies magazine, felt constrained to comment on its ambivalent format:

To begin with, it is neither exactly a book nor a magazine, but takes some of the best features of each. It has the beautiful enduring form, type, and pages of the best books with the books literary quality; from the magazine it borrows variety of contents only.(43)

The critic of the Pall Mall Gazette similarly observed: 'The Yellow Book is not a magazine at all, and its novelty consists only in the undertaking that it will be issued four times a year. You might almost as well call a novel by Mr. E.F. Benson a quarterly.'⁴⁴ This mixture of the two publishing media seem to have carried the dual connotations of

originality and accessibility which the Bodley Head was so anxious to foster. Furthermore, every effort was made to stimulate a bibliophile's longing for private possession by intimately describing the motions of handling the article and placing it on one's shelf. It was not enough to read or borrow the magazine, ownership was essential. Even if one had not been a book buyer before, here was an irresistible opportunity.

Clearly the text of the prospectus both constructs and addresses a new type of collector. It must be remembered that Lane was attempting to expand his market by initially printing five thousand Yellow Books which was a considerable increase over his usual run of five hundred to one thousand copies. One senses that his bid for an expanded market also informed the hope expressed at the beginning of the prospectus that the Yellow Book would be 'popular in the better sense of the word.'⁴⁵ Again the concept of affordable luxury is promoted - accessible to many, but chosen by the discerning.

It is instructive to compare the messages of the text to those of the image by Beardsley on the front cover of a woman looking through a bin of books. As both Muir and Nelson have pointed out, the prospectus depicted the Vigo Street store and the bookseller in pierrot costume standing in the doorway was a caricature of Elkin Mathews.⁴⁶ However, these were inside jokes that would not have carried the same connotations for those beyond the immediate Bodley Head circle. More important was the prospectus' implication that the Yellow Book was suitable reading for the type of New Woman portrayed.⁴⁷ The woman's advanced independence

is firmly asserted by her actions - she is alone at night, when a 'respectable' woman would be chaperoned, and she is buying books which suggests an intellectual and possibly unfeminine pursuit, depending on what was selected. Furthermore, she is not intimidated by the gaze of the bookseller. Her independence is formally reinforced by her physical domination of the scene in terms of her foreground position, large size, and the weight of her black garments. As seen in the last section, her dark, tailored suit was the classic uniform of the advanced woman.⁴⁸ Her fashionably-cut, wide mutton sleeves and stylishly large feather hat complement the notion of her newness. In addition, she has an extremely narrow waist which suggests a thin physique, a very tightly laced corset or both. Her narrow waist is emphasized by the contrasting paunch of the pierrot. In combination with the other attributes cited above, this slender waist carried strongly advanced connotations, as will be discussed in the next section.⁴⁹

Both the advanced appearance and behaviour of this woman on the cover expanded the claims in the text that the Yellow Book would have the 'courage of its modernness, and not tremble at the frown of Mrs. Grundy'.⁵⁰ Evidently the boldness of both the Yellow Book and Beardsley's woman struck a number of male viewers as unpleasantly threatening, judging from a cartoon in Granta, a Cambridge University magazine.⁵¹ Entitled the 'Yellow Boot' (fig. 42), the Cambridge parody transforms Beardsley's New Woman into a grotesquely muscular amazon who furiously kicks the pierrot (changed into an elderly Mrs. Grundy) in the face. Undeterred by either Mrs. Grundy or the surrealistically

grimacing lamppost, the woman is apparently determined to acquire a copy of the Yellow Boot from the remaindered 2 1/2 pence bin. Here the cartoonist equates female self-assertion with physically repelling acts of aggression. It was reading material like this that upset the middle-class sexual and social status-quo as the text of the parody makes plain:

It will be a Boot and a Book - a book to be read and yellow to boot;...in no sense a tight-laced boot; a book for the boudoir, a book for the saddle-room; a book to be covered with brown paper; a book to be put behind the sofa cushions when the children come downstairs;...a book for men and women of the world; a book that will shake the suburbs from Brixton to Peckham Rye and from Pimlico to distant Margate. (52)

Before proceeding to investigate whether the New Woman imagery of the prospectus represented the new type of reader and buyer the publisher and editors envisioned, it is useful to briefly consider the prospectus in relation to other forms of book advertising in the nineties, and to the rest of the advertising campaign for the Yellow Book. Certainly women had long been considered the major readers of fiction, although reading was just as much associated with the traditional female as with the New Woman.⁵³ In fact, reading was one of the few acceptable activities with which ladies could fill their many hours of leisure - the possession of such leisure along with the servants that provided it, being essential attributes of female respectability.⁵⁴ The visual association of women and books was a constantly recurring theme in the press and publishers' advertising during the period. Typical examples of the former are often found accompanying the book review columns of upper-middle-class (six pence) weeklies. Both 'A Bookworm' from St.

Paul's of 1894 (fig. 43) and 'In the Library' from the St. James Budget of 1895 (fig. 44) show women passing their spare time in the elegant surroundings of a private library.⁵⁵ However, these women firmly situated in a domestic environment contrast sharply with the woman of the Yellow Book prospectus who was outside at night, actually purchasing her own reading material. It should be noted that respectable middle-class women who did not have such extensive libraries at home, were generally expected to borrow their reading material from circulating libraries like Mudie's or Smith's where the stock was carefully selected not to upset delicate sensibilities. Furthermore, the woman's reading was judiciously monitored by male librarians who dispensed the books to their customers. Traces of their paternalistic solicitude are captured in a cartoon entitled 'At Mudie's' from an 1894 issue of the Pall Mall Budget (fig. 45).⁵⁶

Apparently it was the spectre of women purchasing their own books - making independent intellectual choices, and acquiring consumer power that was more disconcerting than the notion of reading per se. Turning to a design briefly mentioned in the first section, one sees that Beardsley had previously used this subject of a woman and bookstore in his poster for the publisher T. Fisher Unwin and 'Pseudonym and Autonym' novels which like Lane's 'Keynotes' series contained several advanced titles (fig. 46). However, this poster also of 1894 reveals much less about the character of the woman, who although walking alone in the direction of a bookshop, does so in broad daylight.⁵⁷ Furthermore, it is unclear whether the woman will actually go into the shop and make a purchase, and if so, whether her

selection and person will meet with the bookseller's approval. Nevertheless, despite the absence of some of the more disconcerting aspects of the prospectus, this work was also bitterly criticized for its unhealthy moral tone. The Public Opinion's hostility towards the design's degenerate aspects was cited in the first section,⁵⁸ and the Westminster Budget similarly protested:

The latest publisher to succumb to the charms of the fin de siècle grotesque is Mr. Fisher Unwin, who has got out a poster by Mr. A. Beardsley, advertising his Autonym and Pseudonym Libraries. In the top corner is a little picture of a book-stall, inoffensive if commonplace. There is a nursery-book tree, too, done up in paper quite nice. But by some misadventure there has got into the foreground a gigantic figure, 9 1/2 heads high, of a hospital out-patient, apparently a cretinous negress, suffering from goitre, a sprained shoulder, and acromegaly of one foot, dressed in a red cornucopia, and wearing as a wig a yellow sheep-skin doormat. The poster is well adapted to draw attention. (59)

The writer implies that certain publishers were responsible for promoting the grotesque. As previously mentioned, Unwin like Lane and Heinemann, had a reputation for producing distinctively modern novels. Particularly in such cases, Beardsley's advanced women seem to have exacerbated the existing anxieties conservative critics felt towards the New Fiction. Not surprisingly, therefore, although images of women were widely used to market books and magazines during the nineties, the use of New Women was much less common. Perhaps the closest comparisons to Beardsley's prospectus for the Yellow Book were two well known images of women used to promote rival magazines - Maurice Greiffenhagen's design for the Pall Mall Budget (fig. 47) and Dudley Hardy's for To-Day (fig. 48). Although both which were widely reproduced as posters, mastheads and leaflets were considered daringly modern, neither generated as much

controversy as Beardsley's designs.

Discussing all three illustrators in an article on posters in a contemporary issue of Scribner's Magazine, M. H. Speilmann provides some interesting insights. First of all he observed that Greiffenhagen's woman was unusual enough to attract public attention, but also elegant enough not to repel it. Certainly his large masses of black and white and the fashionably attired woman are reminiscent of Beardsley's designs; but yet the woman is a languid object rather than an active agent. Demurely situated under a protective parasol with her eyes averted from the viewer, Greiffenhagen's woman seems to have met the approval of the predominantly upper-middle class establishment that bought the six penny weekly. Speilmann then described Hardy's design for the down-market socialist weekly, To-Day (at two pence per issue) as possessing 'added charm', 'piquancy' and 'sensuous suavity'. Although he admitted 'There is undoubtedly the scent of the stage and the demi-monde about most of his ladies', he felt these risque elements perhaps increased their appeal. Hardy's design seems to have fallen somewhere between the Greiffenhagen's respectable elegance, and Beardsley's weird 'New Posters'.⁶⁰ While Hardy's designs periodically offended the strictest codes of middle-class propriety, his jauntily smiling and attractively posed women were clearly there for the sole purpose of pleasing To-Day's more liberal patrons. Both of these women were more or less passive spectacles in comparison to the self-contained activity of the female in Beardsley's prospectus.

Evidently the Yellow Book was aimed at a particular reader

constituency - those with some interests and sympathies for the advancement of women. However, one senses that the publisher periodically had second thoughts about the strength of this market, and sought to hedge his bets by sometimes adopting a more conciliatory tone and supporting the social mores of the dominant classes, instead of challenging them.⁶¹ This minor thread runs throughout most of the advertising, and is particularly evident in Beardsley's poster for the booksellers announcing the sale of the magazine (fig. 40). The only strikingly modern elements about this soft sensuous female were Beardsley's hard-edged style and the line block process used to print the poster. The women's flowing hair and garments, and her enclosure within a confined space decorated with flowers were all well worn conventions in the depictions of traditional women.

It is interesting to compare this rather restrained poster with another design by Beardsley which was apparently rejected (fig. 49).⁶² The rejected work depicts a woman more more closely related to her sister of the prospectus with exaggeratedly fashionable jacket sleeves that accentuate her slender proportions. In contrast to a protective sun hat, a large moth/butterfly ornament adorns the woman's head which in combination with the rising sleeves contributes to the overall illusion of the woman as some type of fantastic insect. Reade cites this insect imagery as a symbol of the New Woman's aggressive nature, but her relationship with the satyr-manikin in her hand does not seem unduly menacing.⁶³ More significant is her enormous size in relation to the tiny manikin which, as we have seen, was a hallmark of popular New Woman imagery. Ultimately the more conventional poster was deemed more

appropriate, perhaps in view of the fact that it was a poster to be displayed by booksellers, unlike the prospectus which was mailed out directly to customers from the Bodley Head. Obviously it would be self-defeating to give booksellers something they might be reluctant to display.⁶⁴ At any rate, it shows the publisher's unwillingness to rely solely on one sector of the market.

Moving on to other parts of the advertising campaign, one finds that the claims of the prospectus were essentially repeated. The interview with the editors of the Yellow Book in the Sketch followed these lines with the important addition of reproducing the cover of the forthcoming first issue and a sketch of each editor by Beardsley (figs. 50-51).⁶⁵ While the cover served to whet readers' appetites and help them identify the new product, the sketches served a rather different function which is illuminated by the interviewer's comments on the celebrity status of Harland and Beardsley. This focus on individual personalities leads to the investigation of another publicity stunt which Lane seems to have found indispensable: the creation of artistic and literary 'geniuses'. During the nineties, public interest in the personal lives of successful artists and authors was rivalled only by leading politicians and stage performers. Literary gossip columns, personal interviews, and the publication of numerous photographs, sketches, and caricatures, all helped to create a public profile which the ambitious author or artist carefully maintained. The case of Beardsley is probably the most striking (other than that of Wilde), but other members of the Vigo Street crowd successfully employed this device. Women's magazines

and society weeklies were especially useful for providing this type of coverage.⁶⁶

It should be noted that this cult of literary personalities was a fairly recent development of the so-called New Journalism. The personal interview, for example was a newly devised item still heavily criticized by many of the more staid monthly reviews.⁶⁷ In part, the new emphasis on the promotion of genius must be seen as a result of the more competitive, direct sales book market that will be discussed in a moment. Essentially publishers could no longer depend on the the gradual promotion of their goods through the insitutional network of the circulating library (for reasons that will be explored later in this section). Instant success was now the prerequisites for sales, and publicity was the publisher's responsibility. The bigger the splash, the better. Hence Lane's hiring of an artist with a reputation and distinctive style such as Beardsley, and Beardsley's constant promotion of himself. Old-fashioned literary critics like the 'Philistine' of the Westminster Gazette were shocked by these new marketing techniques. Dazzled by the sheer number of 'geniuses' appearing on the literary and artistic scene every few weeks, the 'Philistine' correctly observed that the whole system of book production and consumption had fundamentally changed:

Meanwhile, I would enter one feeble protest on behalf of myself and my brother Philistines. We must have a rest. We can't digest any more geniuses for at least six weeks. We do our best to keep pace; we conscientiously read every article that is headed "a new poet"; we order from the library every book of every writer who has the "beautiful secret of beautiful prose", or who harps "in a string of beautiful prose music". But we have our daily work to do, and we can't keep up with

it, not to mention the fact that our Mudie subscriptions won't stand it. Moreover, the superlatives themselves are exhausted, and must be left time to recover.(68)

In the case of Beardsley, numerous small entries appeared in book gossip and society columns a few weeks before the publication of the Yellow Book.⁶⁹ Then following the magazine's appearance, reproductions and cartoons of his work further fanned public interest. Other better known Yellow Book contributors (e.g. Richard LeGallienne and George Egerton) were similarly adept at securing this type of coverage. During the month of March a large portrait and profile of LeGallienne appeared in an issue of Woman, while George Egerton was similarly treated in the Sketch.⁷⁰ Although many of the contributors to the Yellow Book were initially little known, after a couple of issues, several of them were taken up by the press for such interviews.⁷¹ It became a mutually reinforcing cycle: the publicity of the Yellow Book stimulated public interest in its authors, who in turn promoted the magazine.

Another essential component in the promotion of the Yellow Book was the press advertising. Carefully placed and worded announcements were run at the beginning of April, and again two weeks later when the first issue was released. Both the location of Lane's advertisements and the lists of other publishers which appeared in the Yellow Book provide important information about the sector of the market the quarterly was trying to reach.

A survey of the London press indicates that paid announcements for

the Yellow Book were far fewer than unpaid reviews and comments.⁷² It is not surprising that as a small company, the Bodley Head tried to generate as much free publicity as possible considering budgetary limitations and the fact that reviews and interviews had the added advantage of appearing more impartial than the direct paid announcement. However, these paid announcements are still worth examining since they pinpoint a target public the publisher and editors were determined to reach.

Advertisements for the first volume appeared in the Academy, Athenaeum, Globe, Punch, Spectator, Truth, Vanity Fair and World. The first two papers had two advertisements each spaced out over a period of three weeks. Most of these weekly papers were relatively serious and expensive - the Academy, Athenaeum and Punch costing three pence per week and the rest six pence. All were well established 'Arts' and 'Literary' reviews with a highbrow reputation for reliable, impartial and scholarly articles, although the tones of Punch and Vanity Fair were somewhat lighter with their illustrations and caricatures.⁷³ Judging from the advertising media selected, the Yellow Book was directed towards an upper-middle-class public with a studious interest in cultural pursuits.

Significantly, part of the rationale behind placing advertisements seems to have been the fact that paid advertisements secured favourable reviews. In a letter to John Lane, Henry Harland working from this premise, suggested some modifications to their advertising strategy for

the second volume:

I think it's a pity our Punch advertisement wasn't given to the St. James's and the Westminster, rather than to the Globe and the Academy. The St. James's especially has been friendly; but it will fall foul of us if we give it no ads. The P.M.G. [Pall Mall Gazette] and Athenaeum were stunning. (74)

Certainly the St. James Gazette and the Athenaeum were some of the most favourable reviews, and in Harland's opinion worth subsidizing, while those of the Globe and Academy were unreservedly hostile. His comment that the Pall Mall Gazette was stunning was perhaps a reference to an advertisement since the paper's review of the Yellow Book was anything but positive. Similarly he may have been trying to win favour with the Westminster which had also severely criticized the first volume. In any event, his comments reveal how carefully the publisher and editors monitored the reactions of the press.

Here Lane may have been trying to capitalize on the growing enthusiasm for studying English literature as a separate discipline both inside and outside the academic community. Originally an area of study for leisured gentlemen, English literature was becoming increasingly professionalized during the nineties.⁷⁵ An English Honours School had just been established at Oxford in 1893, while pressures for a similar move were being exerted at Cambridge. That academia was one of Lane's constituencies is fairly obvious since he distributed books through Oxford and Cambridge booksellers, and comments on the Yellow Book appeared in both Isis and Granta (Oxford and Cambridge university magazines). However, the growing study of English was not limited to the rarified

atmosphere of country houses and academia. During the eighties and nineties, there was a rapid expansion of English manuals, surveys and primers which catered to those attending training colleges or studying for civil service examinations.⁷⁶ Again the study of 'belles lettres' carried elitist connotations, but was actually becoming less restricted in practice.

The first advertisement in the Academy, Athenaeum, and Spectator on April 7 (fig. 52) was a pretentiously worded announcement with a precise description of the quarterly's format and contents. The second version which was run in Truth, Vanity Fair, and the World (fig. 53) consisted of the more straightforward statement that the periodical was 'Now Ready At All Booksellers & Railway Bookstalls'. Included in the second version was a list of titles from the Bodley Head's successful 'Keynotes' series of fiction which suggests that the publisher envisioned a common buyer for the two ventures. This seems reasonable considering that the 'Keynotes' series shared many of the same writers, concerns, and was also illustrated by Beardsley. Furthermore, similar circulations seem to have been projected since the 5,000 Yellow Books initially printed corresponds to the 6,071 copies of Egerton's Keynotes. Finally, the third advertisement announced that the first two editions had been exhausted and that a third would be available as of May 1st.

In conjunction with examining the magazines that ran Yellow Book advertisements, it is useful to look at the advertising that appeared in the Yellow Book. In many ways these advertisements provide a more

precise indication of the Yellow Book's position in the literary market-place since advertising space here was much more exclusive than in the weeklies I have been discussing. In other words, the selected publishers who printed their lists in the quarterly probably were catering to the same sector of the market.

An index to advertisers in the first volume of the Yellow Book listed sixteen contributors.⁷⁷ With the exception of Hatchard & Co. which was a bookselling operation, all of the rest were publishers. These ranged from older firms (e.g. Bell & Son, Blackwood & Sons, Longman & Co., John Murray, and Sampson Low & Co.) to more recent arrivals (e.g. J.M. Dent & Co., and W. Heinemann).⁷⁸ Most of the publishers listed their current selection which varied in price from expensive connoisseurs' volumes down to cheaper works of fiction. For the most part the expensive category consisted of lavishly illustrated and bound books on 'Art' and 'Literature' which were described in considerable detail. While the top price of £25 appeared in both the lists of Sampson Low & Co. for a History of Engraving in England and Kegan Paul & Co. for Early English Printing, the great majority of collector's items fell into the £1-10-0 to £5-5-0 price range.

Fiction was a major category, especially for Bentley & Son who advertised a series of 'Favourites Novels' at six shillings, Hurst & Blackett with their 'Three-and-Sixpenny Series', and W. Heinemann who listed a number of one volume novels at six shillings. Several prominent New Women's titles appeared in these series particularly Heinemann's)

along with a number of more conventional women's novels.⁷⁹ This six shilling price range also encompassed a number of nonfictional works on English literature and book collecting. In fact, Kegan Paul & Co.'s entire list was comprised of books about books to assist the bibliophile, most of these also moderately priced at six shillings. The overall impression gained from a survey of these advertisements is that the 3/6 to 6/- price range was a highly competitive category, especially in the area of 'belles lettres' and new fiction. Significantly there were no advertisements for other periodicals of the type that was common in the daily, weekly and monthly press.⁸⁰ Therefore, it seems that the five shilling Yellow Book was actually competing with the 3/6 to 6/- area of the book market, rather than with other periodicals. This leads me directly to the problem of identifying the sector of the market which purchased six shilling books.

IV Book Prices, Purchasing Power, and Readership in 1894-1895

The location of specific categories of book buyers and readers (an important distinction) is impossible without a basic knowledge of population statistics, literacy levels and conditions in the publishing trade during this period. As a starting point, an idea of the absolute limits of the domestic publishing industry can be determined by estimating the total number of literate people. Using figures from the closest census year of 1891, the total population of England and Wales was

29,002,500, from which 13,123,100 must be deducted for people under the age of twenty, leaving 15,879,400 adult readers.⁸¹ Assuming a literacy rate of 90.8%, the above figure is further reduced to the region of 14,418,495 possible readers.⁸²

Immediately one must realize that this approximate figure of 14.5 million literates is drawn from a range of widely differing income levels. In fact, the precise socio-economic distribution of the literate population is of crucial significance for determining: (1) the physical conditions under which items were read, (2) the amount of time devoted to reading, and (3) what one could afford to read. It was also responsible for shaping the general tastes of the reader, although here a combination of ideological factors came into play (i.e. individual occupational, political and religious allegiances). Suvin has published a helpful table on the distribution of national income in 1867 with a revised update for 1895 (table 1). In his study of the readers of new book-length fiction from 1867-1900, he concludes that throughout this period the working class can be excluded from consideration as potential readers.⁸³ He convincingly argues that the poor conditions of their labour (e.g. long hours and low wages) and housing (e.g. poor lighting, inadequate diets, and bad eyesight) provided physiological barriers to extensive recreational reading, generally limiting that of males to occasional newspapers, and that of females to sensational serialized stories. Exceptions to this overall pattern were found mainly among radicals, self-improvers, and highly skilled artisans who seem to have bought books, but primarily non-fiction or literary 'classics'.

Suvin estimates that around 1880, the average working person's annual expenditure on reading material could not have exceeded 20 old pence or 120 pence (10 shillings) per family of six.⁸⁴ Even allowing for inflation and rising incomes, this clearly puts the six shilling book (or five shilling quarterly) beyond the reach of such families in 1895.⁸⁵ Ruling out any significant working class consumption of the Yellow Book, it is helpful to examine the reading patterns of the upper-middle-classes more closely.

Suvin's calculations for the average person's annual expenditure in the top four classes (table 1) is £3-10-0, or £21-0-0 per family of six, while that of a member of lower middle class II (excluding manual labourers) is 107 pence or £2-13-6 per family of six.⁸⁶ Using these estimates as a basic guideline, only the first four groups can be considered as potential purchasers of the Yellow Book. At an annual subscription of £1-0-0, it seems unlikely that a lower middle class II family would have spent almost half of their reading budget on a single item. Therefore, according to Suvin's estimates we are talking about a potential public response to the Yellow Book that must be limited to the top 11.61% of the population or 1,673,987 of the 14.5 million literates over the age of twenty. However, in terms of the actual number of 7,000 Yellow Books printed, the proportion of purchasers was only 0.30% of the 11.61% that could afford the magazine. Obviously the magazine had more readers than buyers, a point which will be discussed below, but it seems extremely unlikely that the magazine could have been read by much more

than 2-3% of the upper 11.61% of the literate population, or at most 70,000 of roughly 14.5 million literates over twenty.⁸⁷

Clearly the magazine was the exclusive property of a small cultural elite, but its buyers and readers were not necessarily the wealthiest among these upper four classes. In fact, several factors indicate that the magazine was not directed towards the uppermost class (i.e. land-owning aristocrats, large scale capitalists and combinations thereof). These include the Yellow Book's high proportion of fiction, its conspicuous absence of society coverage and current events, and its 'low cost luxury' format. All of these elements would have appealed more to the middle rather than uppermost classes. It should be noted that in general, males of the highest social echelons tended to restrict their reading to daily newspapers and a few serious reviews.⁸⁸ As mentioned in the first section, correspondingly less of their leisure time was spent reading. Significantly, to my knowledge, no discussions or reviews of the magazine appear in Society journals (e.g. Court Circular and Court Journal).

The exceptional members of this class, particularly interested in books seem to have collected 'genuine' not 'pseudo' volumes, or rather older (i.e. not later than the early Victorian), rarer and hence more expensive items. In spite of the enthusiasm expressed by some new collectors for the type of publication designed by the Bodley Head, more established authorities were quite hostile towards these cheaper modern limited editions. For instance, Elliot Stock, editor of Book Prices

Current, and an expert of rare book collecting typically condemned the:

...mass of light literature, got up in limited editions for the mere purpose of stimulating the desires of those who are not rich enough to compete for recognized and very expensive rarities.(89)

Amongst old-fashioned antiquarian book lovers, the 'low cost luxury' of the Yellow Book seemed unpleasantly pretentious. In this respect, the use of 'process' illustration seems to have alienated many reviewers from the start who complained about the 'smudginess' of the plates. The fact that they were set off from the text, protected by tissue paper and elaborately acknowledged, seemed ridiculous to 'connoisseurs' who at the least would have expected hand cut engravings. The critic of the St. James Budget expressed these sentiments:

The pictures in the volume, which are quite independent and disconnected from the text, are all reproduced by process. Every mechanical block has the name of the process firm that manufactured it acknowledged at length, which seems unnecessary, since not one of the sketches could have offered the slightest difficulty in reproduction.(90)

If as I am arguing, the Yellow Book was almost exclusively a middle-class affair, it is essential to break down the monolithic impression cast by the term middle class. Again Suvin has provided an invaluable framework for identifying six major groups:

1) The family reading of the richer bourgeoisie (Baxter's family income of ca. £500 to £5,000 yearly in 1867 - or up to £12,000 by the end of the century), i.e. of rentiers, industrialists, businessmen, bankers, upper merchants. This was an important part of the reading public; it was dominated by women and the proportion of male family heads who participated fully in the family reading of fiction seems to have been small.

2-3) The learned professions, subdivided into: the upper professional gentlemen, attached to the upper-middle class, whose income was within the same

range as group 1, and the lower professional men, attached to the middle and sometimes even lower-middle class, whose income ranged from as low as £100 to £1,200;...

4) The upper and possibly middle clerks in the larger cities, especially in banking, with a family income of perhaps £150 to £800 yearly; Banks notes that, being in good parts sons of the upper working class, their tastes would be strongly snobbish, i.e. conservative and 'respectable'. Clerks as a whole grew from 0.8. per cent to 4 per cent of the labour force, or about ninefold...

5) The junior clerks in banks, industry, railroads, law, etc., some middle tradesmen, upper employees (e.g. a railway stationmaster or tax collector), i.e. the males of lower middle class I, income range of £800 to £200 - more rarely to £300 - in 1867 and not much changed by the end of the century.

6) The 'unacknowledged' professionals, primarily Bank's teachers of the poor - i.e. of the public but not 'public' schools - who came mainly from the working class. They were a large but rather isolated group, for the most part paid under £300 per year and looked down upon by all the other professionals. Their numbers more than tripled after mid century to the c.230,000 of 1901, of which more than three quarters were women ...To this should be added the 50,000 nurses; a number of para-scientific professions, such as the chemists and the engineers below civil and mining ones but above foremen; and finally a great majority of the 90,000 actors, artists, authors and musicians who in their fourfold growth from 181 oscillated uncomfortably between this group (the census figures include e.g. music teachers, engravers and shorthand writers!) and my group 3 or in a few cases even 2... (91)

It should be noted that the majority in the sixth category belonged to Suvin's income group of lower middle class II and, therefore, had less opportunity of purchasing or borrowing the Yellow Book for personal perusal.

This breakdown of middle class readers provides new insights when

considered in relation to the actual distribution of the Yellow Book and dissemination of information about it. As indicated from the advertising material discussed above, the Yellow Book could be purchased through a subscription or directly from booksellers and railway bookstalls. In all of these cases, the net price of five shillings per issue or one pound per annum was not discounted. Although I have not found evidence revealing exactly which booksellers handled the work, it seems logical to assume that Lane followed his usual procedure of selling large amounts of his stock to a limited number of highbrow bookshops (i.e. J. & E. Bumpus, Hatchards, Truslove & Hanson, and Sotherans in London, Blackwell in Oxford, and Deighton Bell in Cambridge).⁹²

Bearing in mind the fact that Lane was courting a wider circulation, it is interesting to speculate on whether he also dealt with such booksellers as F. & E. Stoneham, London's large discount bookselling chain of the 1890s.⁹³ Although there is no evidence confirming this conjecture, it is a feasible hypothesis since the magazine was distributed to railway bookstalls (almost certainly those of W. H. Smith & Son) which catered to a similarly wider market. The case of Stoneham's is interesting to consider since this chain was probably the largest supplier of cheaper middle-class reading matter in London. If Stoneham's handled the periodical, it is unlikely that the net price set by the Bodley Head would have been discounted. Nevertheless the possibility of being retailed through such outlets would have greatly increased the Yellow Book's potential market. In any case, commodities like the Yellow Book seem to be exactly what would have appealed to Stoneham's appearance

conscious public, according to the bookseller's own description of his purchasers' tastes in an interview of 1886:

...we always find that attractive covers in bold colours of gold or red, or blue and silver, depicting some thrilling incident in the volume, at once catch the eye....The more striking and terrible the design, the more chance has the book of selling. Then many buyers look at the edges, preferring gold to any other colour, and white to red or yellow....Nowadays people buy their books to read. These books with uncut edges and the labelled covers have achieved a great popularity. Much depends on the shape of a book....Americans treat them [books] as newspapers, read them, and fling them away. John Bull likes to keep his books.(94)

These demands for a bold cover design, an appealing shape, uncut edges, and a keepsake for posterity were ones to which the Yellow Book catered.

Even more interesting is the interviewer's description of Mr. Stoneham's 'class of customers':

Who has not heard of Mr. Stoneham of the City - perhaps the biggest seller of cheap books in the world? He has seven great shops in seven splendid positions, which scores of thousands of people pass daily, into which tons of books are poured weekly, books as many sorts as the men who pass them. At these seven shops...by which the human torrent daily ebbs and flows, the City clerk buys his reading. We single out the clerk, for he, with his income of £100 to £200 a year constitutes the backbone of Mr. Stoneham's customers... People read novels and light literature. They won't look at anything dull. Political tracts are a drug....Your jaded City clerk, spent and weary with his day in a gloomy office, may buy what he listeth, take his recreation home with him, and be transported to whatsoever land he fancies.(95)

Although Stoneham's shops were all located in the central business district of the city, apparently his suburban dwellers purchased their reading matter travelling to and from their offices. Remembering that this was written almost ten years prior to the Yellow Book's appearance, and

that the intervening period was marked by a significant increase in the number of clerical positions, and in selected instances rising salaries, it does seem possible that a substantial sector of clerks (probably mostly from Suvin's group 4) purchased the Yellow Book. Could these be the residents of Brixton going home from their labour in the City with Yellow Books under their arms that the National Observer critic had noticed (fn.19)? Certainly they were not the residents of Bayswater, a much more exclusive address, who probably purchased their Yellow Books by subscription or from the Bodley Head's usual, more expensive agents. The issue of suburban consumption will be explored further in a moment.

At this stage I want to advance the hypothesis that the magazine was directed towards Suvin's groups 1-3 who bought substantial numbers of it, but that given the peculiar conditions of the publishing industry in 1894-1895 and the dramatic lowering of book prices, it also reached sections of group 4 (and possibly the odd members of group 5) who were much more conservative and outraged by its contents. This seems plausible considering the predominance of women readers, especially in group 1 who well may have been receptive to New Women's issues in view of the fact that it was essentially an upper middle-class phenomenon. In addition, group 2, containing a higher proportion of 'intellectuals' was also potentially more sympathetic to feminist aspirations. Furthermore, it should be noted that it was in groups 4-6 that women were actually making the most economic inroads into the formerly all male clerical labour force, albeit at inferior pay scales. A situation that was generating a clearly discernable misogynous attitude among many males in these groups.

Certainly it was the nouveaux bourgeois that clung most tenaciously to their recently acquired symbols of respectability, an important one being the leisured suburban wife. (This conservatism will be examined below in more detail).

It is possible that a few single working women could have afforded the magazine. In an article analyzing the expenditure of middle class working women in 1898, Clara Collet published a number of annual budgets from professional journalists, school teachers, and clerks. Significantly in almost all cases the budget contained a separate heading for books (as distinct from newspapers). Expenditures ranged from £14-1-2 in the case of a journalist as the highest wage-earner to £0-7-9 for a high school mistress. The average amount was £2-15-0 - £3-15-0 for school teachers, but this included newspapers. Hence one can conclude that only a tiny number of well paid professional women could have bought their own copies, although most middle class working women probably had library subscriptions.⁹⁶

A general survey of the location of Yellow Book reviews tends to bear out the hypothesis regarding consumption patterns since most are located in the upper-middle class press with a sprinkling in a few publications that could have potentially reached the lower-middle class. For example, in the case of the first volume, out of 34 reviews of the magazine, 29 appear in expensive papers (6 pence or more per week), while 5 feature in cheaper ones (1-3 pence per week).⁹⁷ (See Table 2 for a general guide to periodical prices structures) Here I would argue that

even though the numbers of readers in groups 4 (and possibly 5) would have been much less than those in groups 1-3, a general familiarity with the Yellow Book was nevertheless presented to some of them via reviews in less expensive papers, and that these reviews in turn may well have been informed by lower-middle class interests.

In such cases where information about the Yellow Book seems to have reached a wider audience through reviews, some knowledge of the consumer profile of the reviewing publication is helpful (see Table 2). This raises a basic problem in the assessment of historical evidence which warrents a brief digression. By and large the evidence for newspaper and journal consumption is extremely problematic during the mid to late Victorian period after the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Tax and before the growth of accurate circulation figures. In my opinion, prices and purchasing power seem to provide the most dependable guidelines to readership. However, further information may be gleaned from circulation figures which are tantalizing but extremely unreliable in most cases, unless one can verify the number of copies actually printed and sold (as can be done in the case of the Yellow Book through the publisher's inventory). The usual figures cited are the circulations claimed by editors who of course vastly inflated them in order to attract advertisers. It was not until well into the twentieth century that the advertising industry became strong enough to insist upon accurate circulation figures verified by account books or other documentary evidence. Caution must be employed when looking at advertising rates which were equally chaotic.⁹⁸ For these reasons, this analysis mainly

classifies the press on the general basis of retail prices, supplementing this information where possible.

Before leaving this section on Yellow Book readers, I should point out that Mudie's circulating library bought copies of each of the first four volumes of the magazine which would have increased the total number of readers.⁹⁹ Other circulating libraries likely followed suit since Mudie's which possessed the lion's share of the library market generally set the standards of taste and respectability. However, this increase in the total number of copies read was primarily confined to middle-middle and upper-middle class readers because the cheapest annual subscription to the library cost £1-1-0 in 1895. The fact that Mudie purchased the magazine at a time when such morally risky works as George Moore's A Mummer's Wife (1885) were still being rejected suggests that many sectors of the middle-classes did not find the Yellow Book quite as shocking. As Guinevere Griest has demonstrated, Mudie generally assessed the demands of his readers fairly accurately.¹⁰⁰ Another case in point is provided by George Moore's Esther Waters (1894) which was banned by W.H. Smith & Son, the firm that in all probability operated the railway bookstalls which handled the Yellow Book.

The case of George Moore's novels is especially interesting because of his personal crusade against the circulating libraries which he claimed seriously restricted the type of fiction available to the public. In a series of articles and essays, Moore called for the lowering of book prices and direct sales to the public who could then make their own

selections.¹⁰¹ Moore argued that under this new system there would be a sector of the market interested in the type of moral and social problems currently considered too unsavoury by the circulating libraries. Through a curious combination of circumstances (that had little to do with George Moore), this is precisely what happened in 1894, the year that marked the collapse of the expensive three-decker novel and witnessed an ensuing upheaval in publishing prices and distribution methods. Although the events surrounding the collapse of the three volume novel have been amply investigated elsewhere, to my knowledge, the resulting confusion within the publishing trade has not been related to the specific conditions of the production and reception of the Yellow Book.¹⁰²

A rapid review of the events precipitating the crisis must begin on June 27, 1894 when Mudie's and Smith's jointly issued a circular to various publishers announcing that as of January 1, 1895, they would no longer purchase three volume novels, but instead wanted one volume works at the price of four shillings for their libraries. This event is usually considered to mark the official end of the 'free trade' period in books which had prevailed since 1852. For decades the British middle and upper-middle had borrowed most of their books and virtually all of their fiction from circulating libraries rather than buying directly from a bookseller. This situation had arisen when the production of books was relatively small and costs fairly high, facts which made borrowing economically logical. During this period, circulating libraries (i.e. Mudie's and Smith's) cornered the book publishing market, eventually becoming strong enough to dictate their terms to the publishers.

One of these terms was the publication of fiction in the triple-decker format which libraries preferred for two main reasons: the first was the high price of 3ls 6d which was prohibitive for individual buyers, thus encouraging library borrowing; and the second was that three volumes provided a better return for the libraries' investment than one, since subscribers were charged by the number of volumes borrowed. Essentially almost all new fiction was borrowed from circulating libraries which gradually sold off copies of older works no longer in high demand at reduced prices to the public. Over a period of time the libraries' monopoly strengthened to the point where it became impossible for publishers to find any alternative market for cheaper fiction, despite the fact that they were able to bring the costs of books down through technological innovations. British books in general, and fiction in particular, continued to be marketed at artificially high prices. This situation led to a significant decline in the retail sector of the trade which was extensively commented upon during the nineties.¹⁰³

However, by the late eighties, the system was beginning to break down. Mudie's and other circulating libraries were increasingly caught in an economic squeeze: while more books than they could purchase were being produced, they were also unable to sell the old copies quickly enough because of competition from the new practice of issuing cheap one volume reprints. Faced with a serious shortage of funds, the libra^ries demanded that the publishers abandon the artificially expensive three-decker format. As contemporaries and modern scholars have pointed out, the

libraries had signed their own death sentence since the lowering of prices placed books within the reach of the individual middle-class consumer, making subscription libraries unnecessary.¹⁰⁴

It should be realized that the situation was certainly not as straightforward as this simplified outline of events suggests. After decades of stability, the publishers were faced with having to perform a dramatic restructuring of prices within months. Three volume novel production ground to a halt, leaving a lucrative but confusing vacuum. The situation was widely reported in the press through a number of articles and illustrations, such as an early cartoon by Arthur Rackham 'The Bitter Cry of the 3 Vol. Novel' (fig. 54) indicates. In fact, between the July months of 1894 and 1895, publishers experimented with all kinds of book formats and price scales. Competition was fierce as they vied for stakes in the new market.

In some respects, John Lane was in a better position than many of those publishers who had depended on the circulating library trade. Already selling directly to the public, he did not have to alter his basic operation, although he was suddenly faced with an unprecedented amount of competition, especially in terms of his larger ventures such as the Yellow Book and 'Keynotes' series. Publishers such as W. Heinemann and T. Fisher Unwin rapidly shifted the bulk of their production to similar types of books at competitive prices after the announcement by the libraries.¹⁰⁵ The intense rivalry that prevailed throughout these months perhaps motivated the enormous publicity campaign behind the

Yellow Book.

The proliferation of books in the six shilling price range also had the curious effect of making the Yellow Book seem more affordable. Initially the venture was launched in early 1894 as an expensive quarterly with few items in the equivalent price range - most magazines being much cheaper and books more expensive. In effect, the magazine had to create its own market, which as I have shown was a major concern of the prospectus. However, by July 1894, the situation had significantly altered. With much publicity, floods of new six shilling books emerged as competition for this periodical which was dressed up as a book. In other words, instead of looking like an expensive rarity, the magazine suddenly became one item among an increasingly reasonable range of commodities. Hence the possibility of the magazine attracting new buyers who may have been willing to splurge a little beyond their means for something that had formerly seemed unobtainable.

Finally it should be noted that direct sales to the public tended to fragment audiences into various interest groups as well as different income ranges.¹⁰⁶ The general consensus of taste that had been artificially manufactured by the circulating libraries started to crumble, as George Moore had predicted. Writers began to diversify and stray further from the average acceptable position. As new interest groups of readers emerged, they experienced the unfamiliar sensation of encountering positions other than their own in print. It scarcely seems surprising that this shock was sometimes expressed in the inflated

language of moral outrage. In my opinion, this type of shock constituted much of the hyperbole that characterized the public response to the Yellow Book and particularly its images of New Women.

V A Spectacle for Suburbia

The frequently repeated charge that the Yellow Book catered to vulgar suburban audiences warrants further investigation. As we have seen, the National Observer identified its purchasers as men from the City who carried the periodical home for recreational reading in Bayswater and Brixton. Later in the same review the writer continued:

It stands to reason that a quarterly, which boasted its intention of throwing aside the 'traditions of periodical literature' as 'old' and 'bad' was assured of a welcome from the obedient suburban populace which since it cannot be the apostle of the Newness is content to be its acolyte. 'We needs must love the highest when we see it': but Brixton and Bayswater never see anything. Only they admire, and sometimes buy the highest - or the latest - when they are told to do so.

And now The Yellow Book shines - we beg its pardon, glares - in every self-respecting and 'cultured' household.(107)

Similarly we have seen that the Granta predicted that the Yellow Book 'will shake the suburbs from Brixton to Peckham Rye, and from Pimlico to distant Margate'.¹⁰⁸ Both the magazine and its buyers were ridiculed for being unduly pretentious, although it was ultimately the latter who were represented as the victims of a cultural hoax.

Underlying this abuse was the notion that the Yellow Book was not suitable reading material for the suburbanites in question. Although

their narrow-mindedness was used to emphasize the superficial nature of the Yellow Book, in the final analysis, it was also something that needed protecting. In this respect, one is immediately struck by the incongruity of suburban experience with its emphasis on the home, the family and privacy and Beardsley's blatantly public images of urban life - West End theatre, prostitution, opera, masquerades and cafes. Unlike the suburban novels of the 1890s by authors such as Keble Howard, Shan Bullock and William Pett Ridge which carefully reproduced the minutiae of life in Clapham or Peckham, the Yellow Book presented exotic images of non-middle class 'outsiders'.¹⁰⁹ Yet both literary commodities were affordable and avidly consumed, judging from circulation statistics and reviewers' comments.

The fact that the former was more acceptable than the latter relates to a specific notion of middle class leisure that defined itself in opposition to the general lack of working class discipline on the one hand, and the over-privileged and vice-ridden pursuits of the aristocracy on the other. Hence the emergence of what Peter Bailey has described as 'legitimate pleasures' (i.e. healthy physical exercise, mental cultivation) which restored and even expanded one's capacity for work.¹¹⁰ The Yellow Book which stood accused of both East End squalor and aristocratic decadence hardly would have been deemed a profitable use of one's leisure time. The equation which linked the decadent aristocrat, common Cockney and unrefined suburban lower-middle class was visually parodied in the 'New School of Poster: what it may come to' published in the Pall Mall Budget during May 1894 (fig. 69). The

first is represented by Wilde's Salome and the Black Book, the second by the ragged sandwich-man who advertises the pernicious periodical, and the third by the obviously cut-price villas in Dampington Swamp Park Estate as well as the advertisements for cheap hair tonics, corn lotion, and trips to Margate. Ultimately the cartoon exposes the empty cultural pretensions of these social outsiders which are implicitly measured by the high standards of the haute bourgeois. The emerging awareness of the existence of the lower echelons of the middle class, and the casting of them as social 'outsiders' merits further study.

It should be stressed that suburbia was not a monolithic category since the occupations, income levels, and religious and cultural backgrounds of its inhabitants varied widely, according to the desirability of the location. Professional Bayswater was definitely superior to clerical and commercial Brixton, but inferior to refined, almost genteel Hampstead.¹¹¹ Significantly critics seem to have been most worried about the impact of Beardsley and the Yellow Book's writers on the lower middle class. The Pall Mall Gazette spelled out the problem:

The master-quality of the Yellow Book is illiteracy. Under happier auspices the ladies who contribute to its pages might have done quite honest work in the London Journal or Bow Bells. There they might have won the respect of the housemaids and shopgirls of Great Britain; they might have lived and died without ever knowing that there was such a thing as Sex (with a capital). But Mr. John Lane has decreed otherwise, and the lower middle class is in the movement. Highbury and Brixton are arrayed in yellow, and Mr. Aubrey Beardsley is already the patron saint of the back-parlour.(112)

Continuing in the same review, the writer accused the 'yellow'

contributors of ogling at their imagined sexual emancipation. At the centre of his/her fears was the possibility that this 'incursion into what the Brixtonian might call the "fast life"' would prove attractive. It was one thing for a group of avant-garde artists and writers to adopt extravagant poses, but quite another for their ideas to penetrate the bastion of suburbia.

. The ladies of the Yellow Book included such advanced writers as Victoria Cross, Ella D'Arcy, Menie Muriel Dowie and George Egerton. It is important that they were linked with Beardsley in Lane's conspiracy to corrupt the lower-middle class. At the time the Yellow Book was published, Lane had acquired such a reputation for publishing books dealing with the 'Woman Question' and the work of women writers that he was jokingly called 'Petticoat Lane' in some quarters. The New Woman had almost become the trademark of the Bodley Head as Reed's 'Published at the Bodily Head' (fig. 55) implies. Parodying Beardsley's black and white style and elongated proportions, the drawing accompanied a rewritten version of Richard LeGallienne's 'Keynotes' novel, The Boot-Bills of Narcissus. In a similar vein, Owen Seaman's poem 'A Ballad of a Bun' mocking John Davidson's 'A Ballad of a Nun' (originally published in the third Yellow Book) described a traditional lady's transformation into a New Woman writer of the most outrageous type after sampling a Bodley Bun fed to her by a helpful decadent.¹¹³

An attitude of cultural paternalism towards the lower-middle class seems to have been well established by the last decades of the nineteenth

century. Writing in 1885, T.H.S. Escott explained that novels were especially dangerous for women of this group:

Of all the works that are read widely, the most widely read are novels....They regulate the views of life of hundreds and thousands of women, especially in the lower-middle section of society, old and young. The mother and daughters of the English aristocracy out of the London season may read as many novels as the daughter or wife of the small tradesman. But in the latter case there is none of the opportunity possible in the former of correcting the mawkish and mistaken impressions of existence conveyed by the class of writings they devour.(114)

The evils of advanced novel or magazine reading were that much worse, according to a caricature by Arthur Rackham entitled, 'A Nightmare Indeed' which appeared in a July 1894 issue of the Westminster Budget (fig. 56). Here all sorts of horrible apparitions (borrowed from Beardsley's repertoire), most notably three extremely ugly women, attack a spindly specimen of a man in bed by pulling off his covers and making sexual advances. These aggressive femmes fatales, the giant toad and other strange creatures all emanate from the pages of a book in the lower right-hand corner. While cartoonists like Rackham found Beardsley's images ideal material for jokes, other journalists viewed the matter much more seriously. Outraged by the contents of the fourth volume, the National Observer described the Yellow Book as:

...a production which no woman ought to read, which no man will be better for reading. The law relating to the case will be found in R. v. Hickling: 'The indiscriminate publication of a pamphlet, half of it which relates to controversial questions which are not obscene but the other half of which is obscene as relating to impure acts and words, is a misdemeanour.'(115)

It is important to note that such expressions of anxiety came

mainly from critics writing for upper-middle class papers (6 pence weeklies - see Table 2). Evidently their verdicts were prescriptions to convince potential consumers (including the sector of new purchasers from the lower-middle class) that the Yellow Book was fundamentally unsound. In all likelihood, the establishment's fears were fuelled by uncertainty over how many of these first time book buyers would respond. Ironically, judging from reviews of the Yellow Book which appeared in the type of inexpensive weeklies (1-2 pence) that the lower-middle class patronized, the fears of their social superiors were totally unfounded.¹¹⁶ At this stage, it is worth pausing to explore this issue of divisions within the middle class.

Until quite recently, the existence of the lower-middle class received little attention from social historians who were more interested in examining the divisions between classes rather than within them. In a theoretical article on this group, Arno Mayer has argued that despite substantial differences among its members (e.g. those between corporate clerks and family business operatives), the lower-middle class has generated and maintained a separate cultural ethos, life-style, and world view.¹¹⁷ Mayer stresses that in periods of normalcy, the haute bourgeois tend to view the lower-middle class in a negative light as being 'mediocre, provincial, conformist, unambitious, parasitic, selfish, rigid, resentful, prudish and moralistic'.¹¹⁸ However, as soon as the status-quo is challenged, the relationship changes as the establishment woos support from this largely conservative, upwardly mobile social sector. Mayer claims that the petit bourgeois usually has just enough

of a stake in the existing socio-economic order to prevent it from seriously supporting efforts to topple the existing establishment.

Largely working from the same premises, Geoffrey Crossick has edited a series of essays studying the lower-middle class in late nineteenth century Britain. In his own essay, Crossick looks at the extreme conservatism of this group which he attributes to their marginal social status which in turn engendered an obsessive concern with projecting the attitudes and appearances of middle class orthodoxy (i.e. hostility to manual labour and trade unions, support for the Tory party, belief in self-help and free enterprise, and most significant for these purposes, a dependent wife and children)¹¹⁹

Although the position of the lower-middle class can be only sketchily outlined here, I think it sheds much light on the critical response to the Yellow Book. The fragmentation of middle class audiences seems to have been more related to the growing purchasing power of the lower middle classes than any fundamental realignment of interests within the class. In other words, the existence of the clerical sector of the class was not a new phenomenon (although their numbers were increasing). What was new was the participation of the lower middle class in certain areas of cultural activity that had formerly been the exclusive preserve of the haute bourgeois. Mass production and the ensuing lowering of prices brought previously inaccessible commodities like the Yellow Book into a lower middle class price range. This marketing of a ready-made, budget-priced culture was a source of considerable anxiety for

the haute bourgeois since it threatened to narrow the distance that separated them from their social inferiors. Hence the need to disparage cheap imitations of highbrow culture - especially when it contained subversive ideas.

Perceiving the magazine as a threat to their interests, the majority of upper-middle class critics denigrated it as suburban in the hopes of discouraging suburbanites from consuming it. It was a double-edged sword that undermined the avant-garde credentials of the Yellow Book and kept the lower-middle class in its subservient place. Adding the finishing touches, lower-middle class writers who were determined to demonstrate their respectability railed against the magazine in equally strong language. Inevitably this combination of prescriptive admonition and outraged conservatism amplified the terms of the debate. Initially, the strategy backfired since the publicity aroused enough curiosity to sell more copies than even the publisher had envisioned. In the final analysis, however, this combination of interests was to force Lane to tone down the Yellow Book by removing its art editor.

VI New Women, Pornography, and the Prosecution of Pick-Me-Up

In the last part of this section, I would like to examine the prosecution of Pick-Me-Up under the Obscene Publications Act during September 1894. In many respects this trial of a 'soft porn' male

'entertainment' magazine sheds light on the official limits of journalistic 'decency'. These were limits John Lane must have been acutely aware of when he examined Beardsley's designs.¹²⁰ As we have seen, several critics alleged that the Yellow Book also contained obscene elements, and similar charges of 'pornography' were levelled at New Women writers.¹¹⁹ This immediately raises the uneasy relationship between feminist explorations of the nature of sexual oppression and pornographic representations of oppressed women designed for male titillation and pleasure. Significantly both involve a transgressionary flaunting of sexual 'norms' (i.e. procreative, marital, heterosexual activity). Furthermore, in the past both forms of deviance have been lumped together and repressed on the nebulous grounds of being too sexually explicit. Although their attitudes towards women are diametrically opposed - feminists working for liberation and pornographers reinforcing oppression, all too often the blurring of such distinctions has played into anti-feminist hands.

In England, unlike plays which will be discussed in the next section, books did not require official approval before publication. Although there was no book censorship, indecent or obscene publications could be prosecuted after they were publicly distributed. Probably the best known examples of prosecutions in the nineteenth century were the trials of the publisher, Henry Vizetelly, in 1888 and 1889, for handling the works of Zola, Maupassant, and Paul Bourget.¹²² The prosecutions were launched by Samuel Smith, an M.P. from Liverpool and a prominent member of the National Vigilance Association. After pleading guilty and

being fined in 1888, Vizetelly was eventually imprisoned for three months in 1889.¹²³ The scandal of the Vizetelly trials increased public interest in the whole issue of obscene literature.

Of course, less drastic measures of suppression were also employed. As previously mentioned, the circulating libraries often took their own initiative and banned books from their lists. Prominent examples of Mudie's action in this area during the 1890s included George Moore's Esther Waters in 1894 and John Davidson's A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender in 1895 for which Beardsley designed the frontispiece.¹²⁴ Articles in literary columns and even cartoons reveal the extent of public interest in such events. One example, 'The B. P. [British Public] and Its Masters' (fig. 57) ridicules such protective actions by the guardians of public morality. As discussed earlier, during the 1890s such controversy could have the important side-effect of boosting sales.

Such was certainly the case in the prosecution of Pick-Me-Up. On July 19, 1894 thirty-six copies of the July 21st issue were seized from the wholesale branch of W.H. Smith & Sons in Liverpool. Again the action was launched by members of the N.V.A. and directed against Smith's for distributing the magazine. After much debate in the press, the case came to trial on August 28, 1894. The alleged indecency involved three pictures - 'Phoebe', a full page supplement (fig. 58); 'The Entre'Acte' (fig. 59); and an untitled female performer in tights (fig. 60). However, in the case of 'Phoebe', the magistrates ruled that the picture could not support

prosecution. Although their reasons were not specified, their decision probably rested on the fact that the illustration was copied from a French salon painting. 'High art' generally legitimized female nudity, providing no suggestions of licentiousness were incorporated into the picture.¹²⁵ Consequently it was the alleged indecency of the second two pictures printed on either side of the same page that was the issue on trial. The prosecution claimed the indecency involved a combination when held up to the light which made it look as though the right hand of the man was grabbing the woman in tights on the opposite side of the page. Supposedly the incident was emphasized by the absence of shading (which Pick-Me-Up claimed was a newspaper) surrounding the man's hand. The charges were dismissed after the defence argued that such a combination was purely accidental and that the publishers would destroy all of the remaining copies in their hands. Predictably, by this time, a record number of copies of the issue had already been sold elsewhere in the country, and the three drawings had become something of a cause celebre. After the charges were dismissed Pick-Me-Up caricatured the proceedings (fig. 61), claiming that the activities of the reformers had created a new fad for holding the pages of illustrated magazines up to the light.¹²⁶

In the light of this well known trial, it is hardly surprising that such illustrations as Beardsley's 'The Mysterious Rose Garden' (fig. 62) in the fourth Yellow Book which appeared during January 1895 created such a stir. Almost without exception, the illustration was condemned in the same terms social purity campaigners had used over drawings like

'Phoebe'. The Daily Chronicle referred to Beardsley's peculiar indecency while the Westminster Budget called the work 'diseased and unashamed' commenting 'what possible attraction, aesthetic or otherwise, the design which is called 'The Mysterious Rose-garden' can have for any sane human being we are at a loss to conjecture'.¹²⁷

Although the verdict cleared Pick-Me-Up of the charges of intentional obscenity, the fact that the publishers agreed to destroy the remaining copies encouraged many moral reformers and members of the literary establishment to see the proceedings as a step in the direction of raising literary and artistic standards. Harry Quilter, a well known literary critic, praised the prosecution of what he described as an unsavoury illustrated paper 'much loved by our gilded youth'.¹²⁸ He directly compared the magazine's illustration to the costers of Phil May and the trollops of Dudley Hardy. But according to Quilter, these were mild compared to Beardsley's atrocities:

in which the types of manhood and womanhood are, as it were, mingled together, and result in a monstrous sexless amalgam, miserable, morbid, dreary, and unnatural.(129)

While the former undermined the innocence of youth, the latter threatened the entire social fabric. Describing the enfeebling and enervating effect of contemplating Beardsley's work, Quilter urged his readers to:

Just fancy a nation of Beardsleys! Conceive politics, commerce law and religion approached from this standpoint, applied in this manner. And yet why not? Art is we are told with a sickening reiteration, but a reflection of life; why should we not have a Beardsley bishop addressing a Beardsley congregation, or say, Mr. Gully, a la Beardsley, reproving an emasculated House of Commons? (130)

For critics of the Quilter variety, any transgressions of sexual or social norms were necessarily obscene. It was simply a question of degrees with magazines like Pick-Me-Up eventually leading to Beardsley's excesses. The blurring of these two categories meant that 'respectable' women were necessarily forced into a conservative socio-sexual position. In the name of protecting women from the obscene, their access to information about alternative and oppositional life-styles was seriously limited.

A large part of the anxiety surrounding Pick-Me-Up seems to have involved its working class associations - both in terms of its cheap one-penny price and its popular coverage (i.e. music-hall entertainment, sports). Setting bad moral examples to those at the bottom of the social order threatened the whole edifice. Critics' frequent charges that Beardsley's work resembled contributions from Pick-Me-Up seem to share this desire to regulate working class sexuality. In Beardsley's case, however, his offence was twofold: he not only depicted the immorality of the working class, but he also attempted to spread the infection by placing his images in middle class periodicals.

Table 1: Suvin's Classes of Readers

TABLE 1: 1867 Distribution of National Income

	Income per year per person in £	Number of reci- pients in 000s	% of all income recipients	Average income per year per family in £	% of total national income
UPPER CLASS (Land-owning aristocracy)	over 5,000 (large capital investors)	8	0.07	24,700 (keep large retinue)	16.2
UPPER MIDDLE CLASS (rich bourgeoisie- industrialists, businessmen, bankers and upper professionals)	1,000 to 5,000 (middle to large capital investors)	42	0.37	2,800 (keep over four servants)	10.1
MIDDLE CLASS (upper merchants and clerks, lower professionals)	300-1,000 (small investors)	150	1.29	800 (keep 2 to 4 servants)	10.6
LOWER MIDDLE CLASS I (middle tradesmen, junior clerks, stationmasters, etc.)	100-300 (no capital for investment)	850	7.27	180 (struggling to keep one servant)	13.7
LOWER MIDDLE CLASS II (all non-manual workers irrespective of income, e.g. office workers, shop assistants, foremen, small shopkeepers)	under 100	1,003	8.58	75 (wives work in home, shop etc.)	10.3
TOTAL UPPER & MIDDLE CLASSES:		2,053	17.6		60.9
MOST HIGHLY SKILLED LABOUR CLASS	70-100	56	0.48	83	10.5
HIGHLY SKILLED LABOUR CLASS	60-80	1,067	9.1		
LOWER SKILLED LABOUR CLASS	35-52	2,391	22.2	70	16.3
DOMESTIC SERVANTS	10-55	1,230	10.5		
UNSKILLED AND AGRI- CULTURAL LABOUR CLASS	15-52	2,840	24.3	45	10.3
TOTAL MANUAL LABOUR CLASSES:		7,784	66.7		37.1
WAGELESS PERSONS (paupers)	7.5	1,832	15.7	22.5	2.8
GRAND TOTAL		11,669	100.0		100.0

TABLE 3: 1895 Distribution of National Income

	Income per year per person in £	recipients in 000s	% of all income recipients	equivalent Baxter % in 1867
UPPER CLASS	over 5,000	27	0.15	0.08
UPPER MIDDLE CLASS	1,000-5,000	103	0.57	0.43
MIDDLE CLASS	300-1,000	360	2.00	1.53
LOWER MIDDLE CLASS I	100-300	1,600	8.89	8.64
LOWER MIDDLE CLASS II AND MANUAL LABOUR CLASSES	under 100	15,910	88.4	89.1
GRAND TOTAL	—	18,000	100	100

Table 2: A Guide to Periodical Prices

Quarterlies (6/- per issue or £1-4-0 per annum)

Dublin

Edinburgh

(5/- per issue or £1-0-0 per annum)

Century Guild Hobby Horse

Evergreen

Yellow Book

Major Monthlies (2/6 per issue or £1-10-0 per annum)

Blackwood's Magazine

Contemporary Review

Fortnightly Review

National Review

Nineteenth Century

Westminster Review

Cheaper Monthlies (1/- per issue or 12/- per annum)

Idler

Magazine of Art

New Review

Pall Mall Magazine

Temple-Bar

(6d per issue or 7/6 per annum)

Studio

Weeklies (6d weeklies or £1-6-0 per annum)

Court Circular

Court Journal

Graphic

Illustrated London News

National Observer

Pall Mall Budget

St. James Budget

Saturday Review

Sketch

Speaker

Spectator

Vanity Fair

Westminster Budget

Whitehall Review
World

Cheaper Weeklies (3d weeklies or 13/- per annum)

Academy
Athenaem
Bookman
Life
Punch

(2d weeklies or 8/6 per annum)

To-Day

(1d weeklies)

Answers
Pelican
People
Pick-Me-Up
London Figaro
Scraps
Tit-Bits
Weekly Sun

Section Two Footnotes

1

Fraser Harrison, ed., The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974), p. 17.

2

Arthur Symons, 'An Unacknowledged Movement in Fine Printing: the Typography of the Nineties,' Fleurion 7 (1930), p. 96. This factor has lately been acknowledged by Simon Wilson, Beardsley (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1983), pp. 5-6.

3

The tremendous interest in the relatively recent phenomenon of the specialized black and white graphic artist is demonstrated by the spate of magazine articles on the subject. To-Day, the Idler and St. Paul's all featured a series of profiles of black and white illustrators and in 1893 the Pall Mall Gazette included the new category of 'black and white work' amongst 'Pictures of the Year' which included Beardsley's 'Emile Zola' from the Pall Mall Budget

4

One writer estimated that process reproduction cost one-sixth as much as engraving, see C.K. Shorter, 'Illustrated Journalism, It's Past and Future,' Contemporary Review (April 1899), p. 491.

5

Joseph Pennell, Modern Illustration (London: George Bell & Sons, 1895), p. 42.

6

By the end of the century there were some 95 process firms in London. See J.R. Tye, 'Literary Periodicals of the 1890s'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Oxford University, 1971), p. 101.

7

Simon Houfe, The Dictionary of British Illustrators (London: Antique Collectors' Club, 1978), p. 160.

8

'Magazine and Book Illustration: the Use of Process,' British Printer 10 (1897), p. 179.

9

Joseph Pennell, Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen (London: Macmillan And Co., 1894), p. 447. Pennell claimed that dealers generally preferred to buy etching plates from which they could produce limited editions. However, he attributed this preference to a basic conservatism since they could just as easily purchase a pen drawing and make photogravures from it. Also prejudicing the dealers must have been the lower status of process which was still largely regarded as a rather

recent and vulgar medium, lacking the artisanal cachet.

10

Ibid., pp. 4-5.

11

'The Art of the Hoarding', New Review XI (July 1894), p. 54.

12

Ibid., p. 369.

13

For a helpful discussion of female illustrators, see Anthea Callen, Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement (London: Astragal Books, 1979), pp. 199-200. In contrast to Pennell, she argues that more women were entering process illustration as opposed to the the Arts and Crafts movement where the return to hand-crafted wood engravings was overwhelmingly male dominated. However, she agrees that women were primarily active in the areas of children's illustration.

14

Stanley Weintraub, Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p. 35.

15

Contract for the Yellow Book in the Bodley Head Collection of Sir Allen Lane (Westfield College, University of London).

16

Harland seems to have frequently written to Lane mentioning how he kept the literary costs for the Yellow Book to a minimum. In an unpublished letter of June 15, 1894 in the Bodley Head Collection, Harland commented on the expenses of the second volume. He asked Lane to put in another £50 offering to advance him his earnings on the first volume if necessary. Harland also pointed out that he had not been paid for his own contribution of a short story and had covered various magazine expenses out of his own pocket.

17

Weintraub, Beardsley, p. 142. He observes how important the house had been as a symbol of stability and worldly success for the Beardsley family who had constantly moved about sometimes staying with relatives, in order to make ends meet.

18

Brigid Brophy, Beardsley and His World (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 86.

19

'The Yellow Book', National Observer (April 21, 1894), p. 588.

20

On April 21, 1894 John Lane ran an announcement/advertisement in the Athenaeum (p. 522) stating that owing to the enormous demand for volume one of the Yellow Book, the first edition was exhausted and that a second edition was in preparation for release on Monday (April 23, 1894). In all, including a third edition, 7,000 copies of the quarterly were printed.

21

'Literature' and 'Art' being socially constructed categories that are relative, not absolute definitions.

22

For an invaluable source on the operations of the Bodley Head during this period, consult, James G. Nelson, The Early Nineties: A View from the Bodley Head (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971).

23

R.D. Brown, 'The Bodley Head Press: Some Bibliographical Extrapolations', Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 61 (1967), p. 42, and Nelson, Nineties, p. 106. The average late Victorian edition was around 750 - 1000 copies for a three volume novel, more if it was being used in a cheaper single volume.

24

Nelson, Ninties, pp. 92-100.

25

Type sizes above the standard ten point size were discounted because they were larger and easier to set. For example, the Yellow Book was set in eleven point at a time when most periodicals were set in the much smaller diamond type. See Brown, Bibliographical, pp. 41-42.

26

As cited in J. L. May, John Lane and the Nineties (London: The Bodley Head, 1936), p. 39.

27

Brown, Bibliographical, p. 47 notes how LeGallienne quickly realized how effectively a distinctly Decadent tone helped to advertise the Bodley Head. LeGallienne's role as Lane's chief reader is Nelson, Nineties.

28

May, Lane, p. 39.

29

Brown, Bibliographical, p. 48.

30

For a discussion of 'house organs' see Guinevere Griest, Mudie's

Circulating Library (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1976), p. 161. She cites Tinsley as justifying his lack of profit on his magazine with the comment, 'It advertises my name and publications and it keeps my authors together'.

31

An interesting contemporary discussion of Ella D'Arcy's career and her contributions to the Yellow Book appears in M.B., 'Our Portraits: A New Artist in Fiction: Miss Ella D'Arcy', Queen (October 13, 1894), p. 643. This reviewer evidently received special information either from the author or publisher about this forthcoming volume which Lane had not yet publicly announced.

32

For example, 'Reticence in Literature', by Arthur Waugh in the first volume.

33

Whitehall Review (April 28, 1894), p. 13, and Spectator (May 19, 1894), p. 265.

34

By standard I mean that Lane used well established mediums such as press announcements, posters and prospectus leaflets. For a general discussion on the use of these basic tactics in the late Victorian period, see T. R. Nevett, Advertising in Britain (London: Heinemann, 1982), ch.5.

35

R.E. Prothero, Whippingham to Westminster (London: John Murray, 1938), p. 175.

36

Daily Chronicle (January 17, 1895), p. 3.

37

St. James Budget (October 26, 1894), p. 28.

38

To-Day (April 28, 1894), p. 370.

39

'The Philistine' [J.A. Sterry], The New Fiction (A Protest Against Sex Mania), and Other Papers (London: Westminster Gazette Office, 1895), p. 108.

40

Ibid., pp. 121-122.

41 Prospectus for the Yellow Book (1894), p. 1.

42 Ibid., p. 3. The original italics are maintained.

43 Queen (April 21, 1894), p. 628.

44 Pall Mall Gazette (April 21, 1894), p. 4. The same point was also made by the critic of the Daily Chronicle (April 16, 1894), p. 3 who wrote, 'It is, in fact, a book, not a periodical, and any reader who discovers within its covers literature and art of lasting value has but to place it en permanence upon his shelves'.

45 Prospectus for the Yellow Book (1894), p. 1.

46 Percy Muir, Minding My Own Business (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), p. 4, and Nelson, Nineties, p. 12.

47 Nelson, Nineties, p. 299 notes in passing that this New Woman is selecting her own books, but does not analyze her advanced attributes, nor the implications of her presence for the advertising message of the prospectus.

48 This is precisely the type of suit worn by the bicycling New Woman of 'A Valentyne' (fig. 8); the smoker in 'The Smoking Room of A Ladies Club' (fig. 14); and 'The Latter-Day Girl' (fig. 16).

49 An extended treatment of this issue will appear in the next section in connection with Beardsley's picture of Mrs. Patrick Campbell. However, the progressive connotations of the narrow waist as a rejection of the 'natural' role of motherhood was extensively discussed by such figures of the 1890s as the anti-feminist E. Lynn Linton, 'The Wild Women as Politicians,' Nineteenth Century (March 1891): 79-88 and 'The Wild Women as Social Insurgents,' Nineteenth Century (October 1891): 596-605, and has been examined by such modern researchers as David Kunzle, Fashion and Fetischism (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982).

50

Prospectus for the Yellow Book, p. 4.

51

Writing for an official student paper, the contributor was almost certainly male, since women were not formally part of the university during the 1890s, although some lecturers did admit them to classes.

52

'The Yellow Boot', Granta (April 21, 1894), p. 271.

53

The predominance of female readers in the category of fiction was acknowledged by many people writing in the 1890s, one example being Hugh E. M. Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics,' Blackwood's Magazine (June 1895), p. 844.

54

This issue was discussed in the first section in connection with the feminine ideal. Also see, James Walvin, Leisure and Society 1830-1950 (London: Longman Ltd., 1978), pp. 13-14.

55

St. Paul's (June 2, 1894), p. 124, and St. James Budget (May 3, 1895), p. 36.

56

More will be said about the decline of the circulating library system in a moment.

57

Although the poster dates from 1894, the design was actually earlier. A drawing of it was exhibited at the winter exhibition of the New English Art Club in 1893, see Brian Reade, Aubrey Beardsley (New York: Bonanza Books, 1976), p. 343.

58

See section one, fn. 145.

59

Westminster Budget (June 29, 1894), p. 18. The Sketch (July 4, 1894), p. 550 also noticed that the design had secured a certain notoriety.

60

M.H. Spielmann, 'Posters and Poster-Designing in England', Scribner's Magazine (July 1895), pp. 42-44.

61

The conciliatory tone first appears in the prospectus' claim that the Yellow Book would preserve a 'delicate, decorous, and reticent mien

and conduct,...', (p. 4). However, it is definitely subservient to the stress on the modern, shocking qualities of the magazine.

62

I have been unable to determine exactly when and why this poster design was rejected.

63

Reade, Beardsley, p. 348. Reade apparently equates the woman's control of the situation with aggression which seems an unduly paranoid reading of the image. If anything, the manikin's lust connoted by his satyr's horns and ears cannot be fulfilled, but male frustration is hardly synonymous with female aggression.

64

This happened in the case of Beardsley's original title-page for Salome which had to be redrawn because booksellers could not stick it up in their windows, according to a letter from Beardsley to his friend, Ross, which is discussed in the third section.

65

'What the 'Yellow Book' is to be: Some Meditations with its Editors', Sketch (April 11, 1894), pp. 557-558.

66

Increasingly these types of papers devoted more and more space to such short, easy-to-read, items of personal gossip - see Cynthia White, ed. Women's Magazines 1693-1968 (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), pp. 88-89. They were simple and cheap to produce, not particularly controversial (which was an important factor in mass circulating organs) and provided an ostensibly apolitical (but actually heavily ideologically weighted) vehicle, reinforcing the notion that politics were not for women.

67

For a contemporary analysis of the new device of interviewing, consult, 'Up-to-Date Interviewing', Weekly Advertiser (July 1, 1893), p. 117.

68

'Philistine', New Fiction, p. 29.

69

See the entry in the gossip column of the Pelican (April 21, 1894), p. 3 discussed in section one; and similar entries in the Figaro (April 19, 1894), p. 17; and Life (May 5, 1894), p. 7.

70

'Mr. Richard LeGallienne', Woman (March 21, 1894), p. 5, ns 'The Author of Keynotes', Sketch (March 28, 1894), p. 446.

71

The article on Ella D'Arcy in Queen has already been mentioned, and one on Max Beerbohm provides another example, see 'A Few Words with Mr. Max Beerbohm', Sketch (January 2, 1895), p. 439.

72

In the case of the first issue, 28 reviews were located in comparison to only 8 avertisements. Unpaid, of course refers strictly to financial transactions. Lane could and frequently did get free publicity from his publishing friends and connections in return for providing them with similar favours. The infamous literary 'puffing' or 'log-rolling' networks of publishers were frequently debated during the period. For example, see W. Robertson Nicoll, 'Multiple Reviewing', Bookman (July 1899), p. 93 who claimed the practice was not abusive; and Joseph Shaylor, 'On the Selling of Books', Nineteenth Century (December 1896), p. 941 who was more critical.

73

For further information on the contents and coverage of these magazines, see Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory and Advertiser's Guide (1894), pp. 54-75, and Sell's Directory of the World's Press (1894). The most recently started paper was Truth dating from 1877, however, papers such as the Athenaeum and Spectator had been founded as early as 1828.

74

Undated Letter from H. Harland to J. Lane in the Bodley Head Collection of Sir Allen Lane (Westfield College, University of London).

75

John Gross, The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters (London: Weidenfeld And Nicolson, 1969), pp. 167-199 discusses this issue of the emergence of English as both an academic discipline and a measure of middle class ability. He points out that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the subject was not taught in universities. Instead the work of exhuming and annotating texts was performed by private enthusiasts (i.e. clergy, country house gentlemen).

76

Ibid.

77

The sixteen were A.D. Innes & Co., Bentley & Son, Clarendon Press, Hurst & Blackett, Kegan Paul & Co., Bell & Son, John Murray, Sampson Low & Co., Longman's & Co., Cambridge Press, Blackwood & Sons, W. Heinemann, Geo. Philip & Son, Osgood McIlvaine & Co., Hatchard & Co, and J.M. Dent & Co.

78

Here I am using the term 'established' to refer to those firms founded before 1858, a distinction used in a helpful study of the British

book trade, 'Fifty Years of 'The Bookseller' and Bookselling', Bookseller (January 24, 1908): 9-43.

79

For example, Sarah Grand's Heavenly Twins, Ideala, and Our Manifold nature and George Paston's A Modern Amazon.

80

No periodicals were advertised in the first volume, however, volumes two and four featured advertisements for the Art Journal and Scribner's Magazine. Of course this is not to say that the Yellow Book's contributors were unaware of what their competitors were doing in say, the Sketch, or St. Paul's. Certainly the Yellow Book's 'bookish' pretensions were probably a large factor in the provoking ridicule from other magazines.

81

B. R. Mitchell, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 6-12. The Yellow Book was clearly designed for an adult, rather than juvenile or adolescent market.

82

This is a figure I have estimated from statistics provided by Darko Suvin, 'The Social Addressees of Victorian Fiction: A Preliminary Inquiry,' Literature and History (Spring 1982): 11-40. Much of my analysis of buyers and readers is heavily indebted to Suvin's statistical research. He cites literacy figures of 77% in 1871 and 97% in 1900 for England and Wales, p. 19. I have simply averaged the increase to an annual rate of 0.69% to get the figure of 90.8% for 1891. Both an increasing literacy rate and the growth of the population would make the statistics for 1894-1895 larger. However, this does not seem crucial, in view of the more serious limitations imposed by the cost of reading discussed below.

83

Here new books meant first editions, as opposed to new editions of previously published works.

84

Suvin, Literature and History, pp. 20-21.

85

Instead half-penny papers and possibly one penny weeklies formed their staple reading material. During the 1880s and 1890s, a new range of mass circulating weeklies had emerged (i.e. Scraps, Tit-Bits, and Answers) to fulfil the reading demands of working, and probably also Suvin's lower middle Class II (Table 1). A survey of such publications suggests that much cheaper books in general and fiction in particular was advertised in these columns (i.e. in the 1-3 pence price range with 'luxury' volumes priced around 1/6).

86

Suvin, Literature and History, p. 37. The hypothetical nature of the average reader, of course tells us nothing about the enormous variations that actually existed within these groups. However, it does seem useful for providing some basic cut-off points between groups, as it is used here.

87

This 2 - 3 % assumes that each copy purchased was read by seven to ten readers which seems an extremely generous estimate for an upp-middle class 'collector's' periodical.

88

Suvin, Literature and History, p. 20; and Richard D. Altick, The English Common Reader (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

89

Elliot Stock, ed., Book Prices Current VII (London: Elliot Stock, 1895), . vi.

90

St. James Budget (April 20, 1894), p. 4. This was from the sort of expensive six penny weekly that had old-fashioned 'connoisseur' types as critics. Complaints of 'smudginess' appeared in the Globe (October 18, 1894), p. 6; and in the National Observer (April 21, 1894), p. 589.

91

Suvin, Literature and History, pp.28-29.

92

This practice is discussed by Nelson, Nineties, p. 82 who cites the actual subscription list to Daphnis and Chloe by Ricketts and Shannon, published by the Bodley Head in 1892. According to Nelson, these six booksellers were by far the largest subscribers.

93

The 'bookman's' Directory of Booksellers, Publishers and Authors (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893) lists eight branches of Stoneham's, an increase of one since 1886 which suggests the firm had a flourishing business during this period. The locations of the shops were 79 and 109 Cheapside E.C., 129 Fenchurch St. E.C., 9 Old Broad St. E.C., 44 Lombard St. E.C., 5 London St. E.C., 27 Liverpool St. E.C., 14 New Bond St. W.C. Unfortunately I have not been able to locate any catalogues or company records for this now defunct bookseller. In contrast, to available information on more exclusive shops with a long tradition (i.e. Hatchard's), little seems to be known about the operation of discount dealers.

94, 'A Great Bookseller and What He Sells: An Interview with Mr. Stoneham', Pall Mall Gazette (May 17, 1886), p. 2.

95
Ibid., p. 1.

96
Clara E. Collet, 'The Expenditure of Middle Class Working Women', Economic Journal (December 1898): 543-553.

97
In this case 6 pence weeklies would have cost 312 pence or £1-6-0 per year and 1-3 pence weeklies 52 pence or 13 shillings. Again using Suvin's estimates of average annual expenditures on reading as £21 per family for the upper-middle class, and £2-13-6 for the lower middle class, it seems unlikely that the lower middle class would have been regular buyers of 6 pence weeklies (Table 2)

98
The problem of circulation figures and advertising rates in the press is discussed in Nevett, Advertising, pp. 76-86. It was also a bone of contention for advertisers in the 1890s as an article in an advertising journal points out:

...when we buy from a newspaper publisher advertising space we are expected to open our mouths and our pockets (the latter liberally), to shut our eyes, and take what comes. Hence, not only the inevitable uncertainty of the effect of copy has to be met, but the further uncertainty of what circulation we are really getting for our money has to be added to the perplexities of the situation.

T.B. Russell, 'The Uncertainties of Advertising', Fame (May 15, 1894): 6-7.

99
Four volumes of the Yellow Book are listed in the Catalogue of the Principal English Books in Circulation at Mudie's Select Library (January 1895). In her study of Mudie's, Griest has cited the figure of 25,000 families subscribing to the library in 1890. (Smith's is given 15,000 families in 1894), see Griest, Mudie's, p. 77.

100
Ibid., p. 36.

101
George Moore makes this argument in 'A New Censorship of Literature', Pall Mall Gazette XL (December 10, 1884), pp. 1-2, and in his pamphlet entitled Literature at Nurse or circulating Morals (London: Vitzetelly & Co., 1885).

102
See Griest, Mudie's and also John Sutherland, 'The

Institutionalization of the British Book Trade to the 1890s' in Development of the English Book Trade, 1700-1899. Edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Oxford; Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1981), pp. 95-105, from which I have drawn my basic outline of events.

103

See David Stott, 'The Decay of Bookselling', Nineteenth Century (December 1894): 932-938 for an excellent discussion of the plight of the bookseller trying to market prohibitively high priced commodities. He also comments upon the increasing number of bookshops closing. This article seems to be written as a polemic in support of the recent lowering of prices, however, the author still felt better deals with the publishers were necessary to maintain a healthy retail business.

104

'On-the-spot' analysis is provided by a letter to the Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette signed by 'X' entitled 'The Circulating Libraries and Publishers', Pall Mall Gazette (July 11, 1894), p. 3.

105

It should be noted that many publishers were experimenting with cheaper volumes of fiction before the June circular from the libraries. However, after June, the bulk of their production was shifted to cheaper works. Heinemann was one of the first publishers to abandon the triple-decker entirely. This in combination with his interest in New Women's novels and Ibsen must have made him one of Lane's major competitors. T. Fisher Unwin was also making inroads into this same market with his 'Pseudonym and Autonym' series of fiction priced at the extremely low amount of 1/6 to 2/-. A survey of publishing advertisements in the press shows that the Yellow Book and 'Keynotes advertisements' usually appeared in the same locations as those by Heinemann and Unwin, suggesting they were aimed at the same market.

106

Suvin, Literature and History, p. 22, notices that an alternative reading public interested in 'serious' social matters emerges after the fall in fiction prices in 1894. While he suggests that this public was still 'prevalently non-working class', he makes no attempt to identify it more precisely.

107

National Observer (April 21, 1894), p. 588. The quotations refer to the claims of the Yellow Book's advertising prospectus.

108

Granta (April 21, 1894), p. 271.

109

These novels and their suburban ideologies and consumption are discussed in Kate Flint, 'Fictional Suburbia', Literature and History 8 (Spring 1892): 67-81.

- 110 Peter Bailey, 'A Mingled Mass of Perfectly Legitimate Pleasures': the Victorian Middle Class and the Problem of Leisure,' Victorian Studies (Autumn 1977): 7-28.
- 111 For a useful analysis of the different character, including the property costs and basic income levels of the inhabitants of different London suburbs during the period, see W. S. Clarke, The Suburban Homes of London: A Residential Guide to Favourite London Localities (London: Chatto & Windus, 1881).
- 112 Pall Mall Gazette (February 9, 1895), p. 4.
- 113 Owen Seaman, The Battle of the Bays (London: John Lane, 1896), pp. 22-26.
- 114 T.H.S. Escott, England, Its People, Polity and Pursuits (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885 3rd edition), p. 526.
- 115 National Observer (February 2, 1895), p. 324.
- 116 Refer to Table 2.
- 117 Arno Mayer, 'The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem,' Journal of Modern History 47 (1975), p. 411.
- 118 Ibid., p. 431.
- 119 Geoffrey Crossick, 'The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain: A discussion' in The Lower Middle Class in Britain (London: Croom Helm, 1977): 11-60. The other essays in this volume are also extremely helpful.
- 120 The whole issue of whether or not Beardsley's early work (i.e. before he became associated with Smithers) was and is pornographic is extremely complicated and really warrants a separate investigation. Certainly some of his blatantly misogynous poses and devices closely resemble pornographic conventions. Yet at the same time he incorporated so many, unusually positive, references to the New Woman that it is impossible to categorize his images easily.

121

This is discussed in the first section.

122

Flaubert's Madame Bovary was also included among the initial list of prosecuted titles, but the charges against it were later dropped, see William Alexander Coote, A Romance of Philanthropy (London: National Vigilance Association, 1916), pp. 42-47.

123

Edward J. Bristow, Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700 (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), pp. 207-208.

124

Harry Quilter, 'The Gospel of Intensity', Contemporary Review (June 1895), p. 775.

125

This is not to suggest that exactly what constituted 'acceptable' nudity in 'high art' was straightforward or unchanging. For a helpful discussion of some of these issues, consult Lynda Nead, 'Representation, Female Sexuality and the Female Nude', Art History (June 1983): 227-236. It should also be noted that certain members of the National Vigilance Association were unconvinced that nudes in 'high art' were 'decent'.

126

See Pick-Me-Up's special supplement of September, 8, 1894, pp.i-iii covering the trial.

127

Daily Chronicle (January 17, 1895), p. 3. and Westminster Budget (January 25, 1895), p. 18. The Graphic and the St. James Budget also expressed their outrage in comparable terms.

128

Quilter, Contemporary, p. 762.

129

Ibid., p. 778.

130

Ibid.

Section Three: New Women on the London Stage:

Beardsley's Images of Actresses in the Yellow Book

An important dimension of the expanding leisure industry at the close of the nineteenth century was the growth and specialization of London theatres. In many respects paralleling the rising output and sales of the previously discussed publishing industry, the theatre provided a conspicuous avenue for female participation in the dual capacity of cultural producer and consumer. Increasing numbers of actresses, dancers, singers, and on a lesser scale female producers, playwrights and managers were employed in the entertainment sector, while unprecedented numbers of women attended various performances in the capital.

Throughout his editorship of the Yellow Book, Beardsley was fascinated by the stage. His many theatrical contributions to the magazine were typical in their preoccupation with representations of women whose sexuality upset prevailing norms and social expectations. The majority of these were pictures of leading actresses of the day, although he also contributed two illustrations of theatre-goers - 'Lady Gold's Escort' (fig. 63) and 'The Wagnerites' (fig. 64) to the third Yellow Book. As far as this research is concerned, it is the former which are of special interest since they were more extensively discussed and directly related to the 'Woman Question' than the latter. However, before turning exclusively to Beardsley's representations of actresses, it is worth briefly examining these two depictions of highly fashionable West End theatre audiences.

The scene of 'Lady Gold's' Escort' (fig. 63) takes place at the entrance of the Lyceum Theatre where the elderly and conspicuously wealthy lady of the title disembarks from a carriage followed by an effeminate young male escort carrying a large muff. Both are watched by a crowd of curious-looking playgoers. Although the 'deviant' sexual undertones of the image are fairly obvious, its precise meaning seems to have evaded critics writing during the 1890s, and hardly seems any more accessible from a modern vantage point.¹ Stylistically similar to 'A Night Piece' (fig. 24), it also presents West End night-life, but from a different perspective. Here the focus is on high Society's leisured decadence in contrast to the working street-walker who is paid to provide pleasure. Of course, whether the image was interpreted this way by Beardsley's contemporaries remains open to speculation.

Such is also the case with 'The Wagnerites' (fig. 64) which presents an audience, overwhelmingly comprised of women listening to a performance of 'Tristan and Isolde' in the Covent Garden Opera House. Seated in the stalls and private boxes, this too is evidently a very wealthy crowd. Again the illustration was scarcely even acknowledged by critics who reviewed the Yellow Book, although recently it has been interpreted as a satire on the shallow pretensions of Society opera-goers who have no true understanding of music.²

Broadly speaking these images do support my general argument that the Yellow Book presented spectacles of social 'outsiders' for suburban

middle-class consumption. Furthermore, both probably reinforced notions of aristocratic decadence and vice. Beyond that, however, I would be reluctant to force connections between these two images and the issues I will be examining in this section since particularly in the case of 'The Wagnerites, a number of other factors must have been relevant - including the significance of Wagner in England during this period and the work's relationship to Beardsley's other illustrations of operatic scenes.

Instead, it is Beardsley's immediately recognized and avidly discussed portraits of actresses that are the chief concern of this third section. Here his images of the actresses Mrs. Patrick Campbell (vol. 1), R ejane (vol. 2), the woman in the role of La Dame aux Cam elias (vol.3), and Winnifred Emery (vol. 4) will form the focal points of an inquiry into the expanding roles of women working in London theatres with particular reference to debates over Ibsenite or New Women's plays of the 1890s.

In many respects the social status of these women was ambiguous. As West End actresses, they were clearly superior to the working-class, music-hall performers portrayed in Walter Sickert's Yellow Book illustrations. For the most part they were educated, articulate and well paid. Nevertheless, as women working in an occupation that had not yet secured full professional (i.e. middle-class) status, they were only marginally respectable. Ladies were neither expected to work, nor to make public spectacles of themselves on stage. If the subject matter of these actresses was already socially sensitive, the response to Beardsley's images was curiously mixed - two of them being furiously condemned, while

the other two were widely praised. This division of opinion definitely warrants further scrutiny since all four were similarly executed in a style that was closely associated with the circle of Oscar Wilde and the New Theatre.

In the first instance, the outrage which greeted the much detested cases of Mrs. Patrick Campbell as the second Mrs. Tanqueray and La Dame aux Camélias involved plays that centred around sexually deviant heroines. Here Beardsley's distinctively modern style seems to have exacerbated existing social and sexual anxieties surrounding both the New Theatre and the generally dubious social position of actresses. In contrast, his pictures of Rêjane and Winnifred Emery appealed to consumers largely because they illustrated more conventional female roles. The fact that these two images secured widespread critical acclaim (a very rare phenomenon for Beardsley's Yellow Book work) demonstrates that in the formation of critical opinion the high public profile of the stage occasionally overshadowed artistic considerations of style.

In order to lay the groundwork for an investigation into these pictures of actresses, the chapter will begin with a brief review of London's theatrical scene during the 1890s with special emphasis on the emergence of New Theatre. In connection with his New Theatre, three of Beardsley's early commissions of 1894 (i.e. the Playgoer's Club program, illustrations for Wilde's Salomé, and Avenue Theatre poster) will be analyzed in order to assess the nature of the artist's reputation at the time of the magazine's release.

It should be noted that Beardsley's interest in theatrical subjects dated from his earliest drawings in family scarap-books of the actress, Sarah Bernhardt, and a scene from Ibsen's Ghosts executed in his teens (figs. 65-66). Both he and his sister, Mabel, had been interested in acting as children mounting several amateur theatricals. In 1894, Mabel decided to abandon her teaching career and take up acting professionally, a move her brother fully supported and followed with considerable interest.³ In fact, Beardsley had already turned his own stage interest to commercial account in his caricatures from Tennyson's Beckett and Stephenson and Scott's Diplomacy which were published in the Pall Mall Budget during February 1893 (fig. 67). However, these early ventures were typical neither in terms of the sketchy linear cartoon style employed, nor the type of mainstream West End production illustrated. In 1894, Beardsley's more characteristic, densely massed, hard-edged designs had become publicly associated with a rather different type of avant-garde theatre. But before turning to examine specific examples of such work, it is necessary to trace the emergence of the so-called New Theatre.

I The New Theatre of the Nineties

First of all, it should be noted that New Theatre was essentially a derivative form of the old West End theatre scene that largely catered to middle and upper-class audiences by the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Since the 1870s, London theatres had tended to specialize both

in terms of the material presented (e.g. classical tragedy, society drama, comedy, melodrama) and the type of audience attracted. With the exception of melodrama, growing numbers of working-class spectators turned away from regular theatres to the cheaper variety entertainment provided in music-halls where the consumption of alcohol was promoted. As West End theatre audiences became more socially exclusive, their respectability was correspondingly enhanced. This process was assisted by a number of innovations introduced by leading actor-managers (e.g. darkening the auditorium during performances, serving tea and coffee during the intervals instead of alcoholic refreshment, and providing patrons with detailed programmes).⁴

Although cheap seats in the gallery (a shilling) and few remaining pits (two shillings and six pence) still catered largely to the working and lower-middle classes, the participation of these groups was no longer requisite to the commercial success of a production. It was the occupants of the boxes, stalls and dress circle that proved the decisive factor. Furthermore, holders of gallery tickets were carefully confined to their own area of the theatre where their behaviour could be monitored and their crude dress would not offend the more refined sensibilities of those in the expensive seats.⁵ Numerous caricatures of the period underline the enormous social gulf dividing the working class from the respectable strata of audiences, pointing to the undesirable consequences of contact. A typical example, obviously designed for middle-class consumption, was 'In Eadem Mente' from C. H. Ross's book Stage Whispers of 1881 (fig. 68) which depicts an angry workman (possibly an Irish stereotype) from the pit

hitting a gentleman in the stalls, despite the presence of a police officer. Like his smock, the workman's behaviour is singularly out of place, as demonstrated by the fact he does not comprehend the ritual for requesting an encore.

The growth of a relatively homogeneous audience was accompanied by the emergence of a bland theatrical standard fare. Focusing on light entertainment, West End theatres carefully avoided serious explorations of social and moral taboos, particularly in the areas of religion, sexuality and politics. The evasion of such problematic issues was primarily self-imposed by playwrights and actor-managers who were reluctant to risk an offence that could jeopardize the theatre's recently acquired respectability. Nevertheless, self-censorship was effectively backed up by a state controlled legal apparatus for the licensing of plays through the office of the Lord Chamberlain. According to the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843, all productions of new plays required a license before public performances could be mounted. The full text of new plays were submitted to the Examiner of Plays who had the power to accept, reject or suggest changes to the Lord Chamberlain who was ultimately responsible for issuing a licence. The performance of unlicensed or rejected plays was an offence subject to prosecution. The existence of such legislation demonstrates the prevalent nineteenth century conviction that the stage exerted a powerful influence on public opinion, possessing the potential to arouse threatening crowds.⁶

However, according to J.R. Stephen's detailed study of theatrical

licensing from 1824 - 1901, censorship was seldom deployed until the development of a serious alternative drama in the middle of the 1880s that sought to explore forbidden moral terrain.⁷ Seeking an antidote for the West End's light fare, and inspired by the Norwegian writer, Henrik Ibsen, the work of such younger English playwrights as Arthur Pinero, Henry Jones, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, provided new challenges to the Examiner of Plays. A series of much publicized rejections, including Wilde's Salomé (1892), Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893), and William Heinemann's The First Step (1895) fuelled a mounting debate over the principle of censorship. All three of these rejected plays were later published in the hope of appealing directly to the public thereby revealing the shortcomings of the censorship system.⁸ It should be remembered that books had to be individually prosecuted on the grounds of indecency after publication which made suppression considerably more difficult.⁹

Although the term New Theatre should not be considered a monolithic category, both its exponents and critics seem to have based their identification upon the challenge it presented to the theatrical status-quo in two basic ways.¹⁰ First was the introduction of new subjects previously regarded as unsuitable for the stage (i.e. religious skepticism, adultery, prostitution, venereal disease) that were examined as pressing social problems. Second was the alternative it provided to commercial theatres that relied on sizable family audiences in order to clear a profit. Instead, mainly from necessity, New Theatre productions were low budget affairs which attracted a special type of intellectual

adult who was often willing to attend private performances in a theatre club, or buy texts of the play for individual or organized group readings.¹¹ Among the many theatrical societies which sprang into existence during this period were the Shelly Society which mounted a performance of The Cenci in 1886; the Playgoer's Club, an influential group of amateur enthusiasts who attended first nights, and arranged regular lectures and social events; the Bedford Park Circle, centred around the playwright, John Todhunter; and the well known Independent Theatre organized by J.T. Grein which privately staged advanced or commercially risky plays including Ibsen's Ghosts in 1891 and Shaw's Widowers' Houses in 1892.¹²

Of the new subjects introduced to the stage, probably the most widely explored theme was the questioning of conventional sexual morality, especially the severe limitations imposed on middle-class women by the double-standard. Countless variations on this theme ranged from Ibsen's presentation of Nora, a woman trapped and frustrated by a traditional marriage in A Doll's House, first produced in London in 1889, to Pinero's examination of Paula, a nouveau bourgeois woman with a past in The Second Mrs. Tanqueray of 1893. It should be noted that the advanced woman was not always portrayed sympathetically. Sydney Grundy openly mocked and attacked her in his play entitled The New Woman of 1894, while only Shaw and Ibsen created heroines who were strong enough to survive in a sea of social prejudice. On the stage most women who transgressed social and sexual norms were inevitably destroyed by the enormity of their deeds. Nevertheless, their existence, aspirations, and

ultimate victimization by prevailing social structures rather than an inherent female weakness stimulated a tremendous stir in certain circles.¹³ These were the circles with which Beardsley theatrical images were mainly identified. This point was emphasized in Charles Harrison's cartoon 'The New School of Poster' (fig. 69) from the Pall Mall Budget of May 1894 which connects Beardsley's style and the Black Book with such advanced theatrical projects as Wilde's Salomé, George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man (parodied as Fists and the Lady), and the Independent Theatre's productions of Ibsen (caricatured as Bjohanson's Scandanavian play).

II Beardsley's Design for the Playgoer's Club

During the first months of 1894, prior to the Yellow Book's publication in April, Beardsley executed a series of much publicized commissions that were closely connected with the New Theatre. The first was a menu designed for the tenth annual dinner of the Playgoer's Club held on January 28, 1894 (fig. 70). Although this was a private affair, the design was published in the Sketch with a brief account of the event at which the playwright, Arthur Pinero, was the main guest speaker.¹⁴ The design included photographs of the club's executives interspersed with three of Beardsley's figures wearing Japanese styled fancy dress. Several masks and masqueraders were also the principal decorative motifs on the front and back covers. At this point, the discussion of masquerade designs will be postponed until the next section.

Although the details of this commission remain unclear, Beardsley may have been offered the work through his association with the Secretary of the Club, Carl Hentschel (lower left photograph), who owned the process-engraving firm that reproduced most of Beardsley's illustrations during this period.¹⁵ In any case, this design marks the beginning of Beardsley's connection with progressive theatre groups. The Playgoer's Club had been founded in 1884 by Heneage Mandell as a body that sought to foster high quality dramatic art by attending opening nights, reading papers on theatrical topics, and publishing a magazine to disseminate their views.¹⁶ Long standing members of the venture included G.B. Burgin, Jerome K. Jerome, and J.T. Grein. Enthusiastic supporters encompassed a wide range of stage professionals from younger actor-managers such as George Alexander of the St. James Theatre, to playwrights like Pinero and Jones and critics like William Archer. A survey of the speeches delivered at the annual dinners reveals the group's continuing commitment throughout the decade to what they considered higher forms of intellectual drama.¹⁷

III The Infamous Salomé Illustrations

Decidedly more risqué was Beardsley's next theatrical undertaking: the notorious illustrations for the first English translation of Oscar Wilde's play, Salomé published by the Bodley Head in February.

Completed in 1892, rehearsals for the play with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role and Albert Darmont as Herod were well underway at the Palace Theatre in London when the Lord Chamberlain's decision not to license the play was announced in June.¹⁸ The official reason for refusal was the fact that the play contained Biblical characters which could not be represented on the English stage. However, a confidential letter from the Examiner of Plays, Edward Pigott, reveals that he found virtually all aspects of the work offensive, including its exploration of sexual relationships. Writing to a close friend, he commented:

I must send you for your private edification & amusement, this ms. of a 1 act piece...written by Oscar Wilde! It is a miracle of impudence; and I am bound to say that when Mr. Abbey, his Acting Manager, called on me, in answer to my summons, he lifted up his eyes with a holy shudder of surprise, when I described the piece to him, & recommended him (as Uncle Toby advised the father of the juvenile Poet) to 'wipe it up & say no more about it'.... The piece written in French - half Biblical, half pornographic - by Oscar Wilde himself. Imagine the average British public's reception of it. (19)

The banning of Wilde's play had significant public repercussions, especially in view of the fact that an actress of Bernhardt's stature had taken on the leading role. However, according to Wilde, not a single actor protested the verdict, and only one drama critic condemned the principle of censorship. William Archer's isolated defence of Wilde took the form of a letter to the Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette in which he urged Wilde to persevere in his fight against the petty tyranny of English officialism. Only through such struggles could the odious constraints of licensing be abolished allowing the growth of serious native drama.²⁰

Barred from the English stage, the original French text of Wilde's

play was published in February 1893 by the Librairie de l'Art in Paris and Mathews and Lane in London. This first unillustrated French edition aroused storms of controversy. Critics writing for major dailies immediately condemned the play as a product of the decadent school. Typically the Times reviewer discussed Ibsen's The Master Builder and Wilde's Salomé in the same column finding many similarities. Commenting on the latter, she/he noted, 'It is an arrangement in blood and ferocity, morbid, bizarre, repulsive, and very offensive in its adoption of scripture phraseology to situations the reverse of sacred'.²¹ Only a few of Wilde's admirers defended the work, and then they carefully restricted their praise to formal matters. Even Willlliam Archer, still championing Wilde's cause, carefully pointed out that he did not approve of the characters' actions:

The atmosphere of the play is certainly none of the healthiest; but if an artist sets forth to paint a fever jungle, we can scarcely complain if his picture be not altogether breezy and exhilarating. As well look for a bracing sirocco or a tonic miasma. Salomé is an oriental Hedda Gabler and who could portray such a character in the hues of radiant health? (22)

The real bone of contention was the suitability of the subject matter for public performance. Although this problem was recognized by both sides, a precise analysis of Wilde's plot, particularly his handling of sexual issues was conspicuously absent. Great pains were taken to evade mentioning the central themes of Herod's incestuous lust for Salomé, Salomé's necrophiliac obsession with the head of John the Baptist, and the page's homosexual attraction to the Syrian youth.²³ In all likelihood, those writing for the established press sought to avoid offending their readers with what would have been considered sordid

details, while those defending the play did not wish to fuel their opponents' fire.

If the literary reviewers of the first French edition of Wilde's play dodged these themes of deviant sexuality, Beardsley's illustrations for the following English edition highlighted them. In fact the renewed outrage that greeted the English translation by Lord Alfred Douglas in February 1894 was primarily directed towards the illustrations. Beardsley had been the publishers' and author's first choice as illustrator. His commission for ten full-page drawings and cover at the total cost of £52-10-0 had been written into the original contract signed on August 3, 1893.²⁴ Wilde, who chose Beardsley over Charles Ricketts who had provided him with illustrations since 1891, probably based his selection on Beardsley's uncommissioned drawing for the play 'J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche Iokanaan' (fig. 71) which had been published in the Studio the previous April.²⁵ Furthermore, Beardsley's reputation for specializing in the grotesque and supernatural (demonstrated in his two earlier commissions for J.M. Dent - Le Morte Darthur and Bon-Mots of Sydney Smith and R. Brinsley Sheridan) must have seemed particularly appropriate for Wilde's play.

The trouble began as Beardsley started submitting illustrations and the publishers asked him to change four of the designs which they considered too sexually explicit. The modifications involved removing the genitals from the two figures on the title-page (figs. 72-73), reworking the 'Toilet of Salomé' (figs. 74-75), adding a fig-leaf to cover the nude

youth in 'Enter Herodias' (figs. 76-77), and substituting the 'Black Cape' (fig. 79) for 'John and Salomé' (fig. 78). On one level, the modifications must have been designed to protect the publisher from the threat of prosecution which was a very real possibility as I have indicated in the case of Pick-Me-Up. As a shrewd businessman, this was probably Lane's main concern. Nevertheless, on a second level, when one examines the specific items suppressed and the resulting substitutions, a consistent pattern emerges whereby sexual deviance is downplayed in favour of male dominated heterosexuality. After all, this is hardly surprising given the fact that the category of the obscene tended to engulf all transgressions of prevailing norms. Hence a number of sexual inequalities were built into the system of visual respectability including such striking examples as the mandatory covering of male genitals and the titillating exposure of female breasts. While Lane probably operated primarily on the simple level of expurgating the potentially prosecutable, the standard of acceptability which informed his decisions was anything but neutral.

In spite of the fact that the Salomé illustrations have been discussed extensively elsewhere, it is worth quickly reviewing these alterations since they demonstrate the types of sexual taboos Beardsley was transgressing and the threshold of the publishers' willingness to appear risqué.²⁶ Before proceeding further, it should be pointed out that while Beardsley's Salomé illustrations defied conventional middle-class moral standards, this challenge was not consistently the product of a positive attitude towards the advancement of women. In fact,

many of the Salomé illustrations carried ambivalent and in some cases misogynist connotations which remain disconcerting for the feminist researcher. Nevertheless, by upsetting prevailing stereotypes and norms, Beardsley's images opened up a space for questioning 'natural' sexual differences.

The title-page (fig. 72) presented the first problem. According to a letter from Beardsley to his friend Ross, the design which was to have doubled as a promotional poster would have offended booksellers:

I think that the title page I drew for Salomé was after all 'impossible'. You see booksellers couldn't stick it up in their windows. I have done another with rose pattern and Salome and a little grotesque Eros, to my mind a great improvement on the first. (27)

With a keen eye for business, the publisher demanded the removal of the male genitals from both figures. This speedy operation effectively transformed the androgynous statue into a more orthodox female nude and the formerly aroused, possibly homosexual worshipper into a genderless Eros (fig. 73). Evidently impotent nudity within a bizarre and exotic setting was permissible, while depictions of genital abnormality and homosexuality went beyond the pale.

Again Beardsley's explicit depiction of genitals and 'deviant' sexual practices in the 'Toilet of Salomé' (fig. 74) formed the basis of the publisher's rejection of the first version of the drawing. According to Reade, the most offensive factor was the auto-eroticism practiced by the youth on the stool gazing at the boy with the coffee-tray.²⁸

Although this incident is the most striking, the entire scene is pervaded

with sexual suggestion. The boy with the tray has a strangely effeminate appearance resembling Salomé at whom he gazes. The long flowing hair, hint of breasts, curving abdomen and complete nudity except for the flimsy footwear are all qualities usually associated with images of women. The presence of this hermaphroditic person creates an aura of confusion not only about his/her sex but also over the precise relationship the figures bear to each other. The female attendant looks at the seated youth who stares at the figure with the tray who in turn watches Salomé. Heterosexual and homosexual desire is suggested in addition to the auto-eroticism of the youth and implied by Salomé's position in front of the mirror. The categories of normal / abnormal, natural / unnatural, are also eroded by the presence of an unearthly masked pierrot powdering Salomé's hair and a strange fetus-like statue on the table. Significantly, the pierrot's coat tails echo the contours of Salomé's breasts heightening the scene's overall eroticism. Further obscuring the distinctions between natural and unnatural is the ritual of Salomé's toilet and its connotations of artifice which will be discussed subsequently. Set amidst modern furnishings (the Aesthetic dressing-table and latched sliding window) with a decadent French novel by Zola and Baudelaire's Fleurs des Mal, this sexual confusion is specifically located in the nineteenth century.

In the second drawing of the subject (fig. 75) which the publishers accepted, Beardsley highlighted the nineteenth century context but abandoned all overt references to sexual activity. The three attendants are omitted, leaving only Salomé and the pierrot. The Aesthetic

dressing-table is retained and a chair of similar design added along with a modern Venetian blind. A different selection of conspicuously scandalous works features Zola's Nana, Prevost's Manon Lescault, Verlaine's Les Fêtes Galantes, Apuleius' Golden Ass and an unidentified (but no doubt vice-ridden) book by the Marquis De Sade.²⁹ If the setting is more outre than the initial design, its inhabitants are more restrained. Depicted fully clothed in an evening dress and flowing cape, no hint of Salomé's former auto-eroticism remains. Instead she turns towards the viewer with the commanding expression of a femme fatale, dangerous and self-confident. Once again the depiction of what would have been considered explicitly deviant was rejected in favour of a more traditional image of woman as seductress.

The same point can be made with respect to Beardsley's fifth drawing entitled 'Enter Herodias' (figs. 76-77) for which a fig-leaf was requested to cover the genitals of the facially effeminate page who holds a powder puff. As Reade has indicated:

...the leaf concealed the point that the youth with the powder-puff, who has removed his mask, is not excited by Herodias and possibly not by women at all; unlike the infantile monster opposite, whose excitement is covered by his clothing and whose hydrocephalous expression is fated to be lustful. (30)

Here too it is the implication of homosexuality that is suppressed while female nudity and heterosexual desire, however monstrous, remain. It is certainly open to question whether this suppression of homosexuality in favour of heterosexuality was part of a conscious strategy on the publisher's part. Again Lane simply may have been removing and covering

exposed genitals as a legal safeguard. Whatever the publisher's motives, it was highly unlikely that Lane would have missed the detail of the creature's erection considering the energy he devoted to scrutinizing Beardsley's images.³¹ Furthermore, its compositional prominence which the Oscar Wilde figure emphasizes with a gesture of showmanship would have made it hard to overlook. In this instance, however, Lane may have been confident that Salomé's critics would have missed the detail and / or that it would not have supported prosecution. Finally another aspect difficult to ignore is the gargantuan scale of Herodias who towers above the scene. Both her intimidating size and the unnatural creature's attraction to her disturbingly suggest a latent misogyny on the part of the illustrator.³²

For the purposes of this research, probably the most interesting alteration of Beardsley's original plan was the substitution of the 'Black Cape' (fig. 79) for the original drawing of 'John and Salomé' (fig. 78). Like the toilet scene, the 'Black Cape' depicts the heroine in identifiably nineteenth century dress. The extreme lengths of this woman's pursuit of fashion is revealed by her tiny waist, multiple-tiered cape, and the small hat perched precariously on a mountain of elaborately arranged hair. In particular this multi-caped style of coat was a short-lived fad especially fashionable during the winter of 1893-1894 (fig. 80). Such style and artifice connote that this is not a 'natural' woman. Reinforcing this notion is the revelation of the woman's navel which suggests she is wearing nothing more than a frilly petticoat beneath her outer garments. To a Victorian public such flashy but scanty attire

indicated easy virtue and often prostitution.³³ In this case the up-to-date style of the woman's clothes would have been typical of the upper echelons of demi-monde who frequented certain West End theatres, music-halls and restaurants. As examined in the first section, the West End street-walker was a subject that preoccupied Beardsley in some later closely related illustrations for the Yellow Book. Here it is noteworthy that the publishers decided the 'Black Cape' was less offensive than the rejected 'John and Salomé' which was not published until 1907.³⁴

Interestingly modern art historians seem to have been somewhat mystified by the publisher's choice, finding nothing particularly upsetting about either image:

The relatively innocent 'John and Salomé' - it endowed Salome with a pronounced navel - was replaced with 'The Black Cape', a burlesque on the nineties vogues in dress, which showed a fashionable woman in a narrow-waisted, wide-skirted, multiple-caped black coat. It could have offended no one except a reader who expected the illustrations to have some connection with the text. (35)

In this case, the distance separating nineteenth and twentieth century viewing conditions appears to have obscured the original connotations of the images. It has already been argued that the 'Black Cape' was less innocuous than the writer assumes, and at this point I would like to suggest that given the context of the commission, the 'John and Salomé' would have seemed even more disconcerting. This substitution, in particular, implies that the publisher was motivated by more than simply a fear of prosecution since it was a specific construction of

female sexuality rather than sexual explicitness (i.e. exposed genitals) per se that appears to have been offensive.

The scene depicts the meeting of John and Salomé in the garden where the princess expresses her desire for the prophet's body. John resists her advances finally retreating into the cave of his imprisonment to escape her mocking threat 'I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan'.³⁶ Throughout the confrontation it is Salomé who initiates the action: having the prophet brought from his cell, questioning him, and articulating her own passion. Her exposed breasts and navel, open mouth and position of straining towards the holy man visually expresses her longing which is checked by the upright, fully clothed, form of John the Baptist. Yet it is the figure of Salomé that dominates breaking through the background outlines which run over the less substantial body of the prophet.³⁷

One of the most striking aspects of the Salomé illustrations is the sexual ambiguity of many figures, including John the Baptist whose size, refined facial features, and long flowing hair resemble the figure of Salomé. Moreover, although Salomé's breasts physically reveal her womanhood, it has been argued that the presence of such male symbols as the bony projections decorating her hair actually represent an androgynous ideal.³⁸ This blurring of gender differences is reinforced by her sexual initiative, a privilege usually reserved for men. As earlier seen in the case of the title-page androgyny was unacceptable to the publishers. Like homosexuality and auto-eroticism, it was a form of sexual deviance that was selectively eradicated. Sexual suggestion was

perfectly permissible as long as it remained within conventional heterosexual confines. Presenting women as passive objects for male arousal was fine, but depicting them assertively satisfying their own desires was not.

Clearly visual representations of abnormal sexual practices were more disturbing than literary ones, as demonstrated by the publisher's vetting of Beardsley's illustrations. To my knowledge, neither the author, nor the translator was asked to make any modifications. Perhaps this was because Wilde's reputation was larger than Beardsley's which would have made it easier for him to have sought another publisher. More likely, however, was the fact that Beardsley had transformed verbal innuendos of sexual vice into graphic illustrations. A case in point was Beardsley's explicit portrayal of the seated youth's homosexual desire in the 'Toilet of Salomé' (fig. 74). Such relationships were only hinted at in the speech of the page lamenting the suicide of the Syrian captain:

The Young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself
who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes
and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed
himself. (39)

Certainly, as Weintraub has observed, the Salomé illustrations contained more specifically erotic details than had been previously published and openly distributed in England.⁴⁰ This of course excluded privately printed and circulated pornography which had its own specialized market. These stricter codes of visual decorum could have only augmented the shock value of Beardsley's pictures.

Yet in spite of its intensity this shock was confined to a relatively small number of people. Compared to other ventures such as the 'Keynotes' series of novels and the Yellow Book, the distribution of Salomé was more limited in terms of the high price and size of the edition. Despite the fact that the work sold well, bringing Mathews and Lane a healthy return on their investment, only a relatively small number of books were printed - 125 copies of the de luxe edition on Japanese paper costing 30 shillings each and 750 of the ordinary edition at 15 shillings. This meant the ordinary edition cost three times as much as the Yellow Book at five shillings, and four times as much as the 'Keynotes' novels at two shillings and six pence. In addition, there were fewer than one fifth of the number of copies printed. These facts combined with the large number of subscription sales suggest that Salomé was primarily designed for Lane's specialized limited edition clientele - a fact which was recognized by the Studio critic who noted that the book would mainly appeal to 'collectors of rare and esoteric literature'.⁴¹

At this stage I would like to suggest that his specialized clientele was overwhelmingly composed of upper-middle class males. It is doubtful whether many women of the same class would have been shown the book or had easy access to the limited sales outlets. In any case, few women would have had enough money of their own to decide to purchase a copy without consulting their husbands, fathers or guardians who would have probably considered it inappropriate. As discussed in the first chapter, this did not apply to the Yellow Book and 'Keynotes' series

which were marketed from readily accessible places at affordable prices consequently reaching a high percentage of women. Here I think it is likely that the different sexual composition of the two readerships partially accounted for the greater homosexuality, misogyny and focus on women as objects of male pleasure in the Salomé illustrations. Although all three elements occasionally appear in the Yellow Book and 'Keynotes' series, they are quite subdued. It seems significant that they again re-emerge as major themes in Beardsley's later work for the quasi-pornographic publisher, Leonard Smithers who also catered to a predominantly male market.

Before leaving this section on the Salomé drawings, it is important to emphasize that the book's small circulation did not prevent the illustrations from acquiring a second-hand notoriety through press reviews, reproductions, and caricatures which appeared in such magazines as the Studio, Pall Mall Budget and Punch (figs. 81, 69, 82).⁴² This type of coverage tended to exaggerate the book's infamous reputation in the minds of those who had little wish or opportunity to consult the original. Inevitably, Beardsley became firmly identified with Oscar Wilde's circle, as least as far as the press and general public were concerned.⁴³ As Beardsley himself commented during an interview in May 1894, 'My illustrations of Mr. Oscar Wilde's 'Salomé' were what have caused most sensation and brought down most wrath.'⁴⁴ It was with this perverse reputation already established that he embarked on the bulk of his theatrical designs.

IV The Avenue Theatre Poster and Programme Design

His next endeavour, a poster and programme design for John Todhunter's new play, 'A Comedy of Sighs' at the Avenue Theatre (fig.83) involved a production as much a part of the New Theatre as Wilde's Salomé. Beardsley's work on this project brought him into even closer contact with New Women during the initial making of the poster and afterwards through the public controversy surrounding it. The work was undertaken in February 1894 for Florence Farr, the play's producer. A letter from Beardsley to Farr reveals that she was very much the driving force behind mounting the play and arranging the artwork:

Dear Miss Farr,

I think you will find dark green on light the most satisfactory scheme of colour, though it has often been used before for magazine covers etc. Of course I should make my design in black and white, so that a zinc block can be made, and from that you can print in any colour you like. By the way, if my design is going to be used as a poster had I not better draw it large size and have it reduced for the programme?

I saw Mrs. Todhunter yesterday who told me that you hadn't yet definitely settled on a theatre. I shall be able to start my picture whenever you like. (45)

Yours sincerely, Aubrey Beardsley⁴⁵

Florence Farr was one of the earliest and quite well-known of a group of actresses who built their careers on advanced female roles during the late 1880s and early 1890s.⁴⁶ Like Janet Achurch and Elizabeth Robins, Florence Farr took on both the production and leading female parts in some of the first London productions of Ibsen's plays⁴⁷ Mounting

the plays of the Norwegian playwright became something of a political crusade for this small circle of staunchly feminist actresses. In 1889 Janet Achurch produced and starred in A Doll's House using money she had secured from Henry Irving (actor-manager of the Lyceum Theatre) on the initial pretext of mounting a comedy. Determined to reach as wide an audience as possible, she took the play on tour through England and Scotland. In 1891 Elizabeth Robins with the American actress, Marion Lea, produced a successful version of 'Hedda Gabler' which ran for five weeks instead of the five matinees originally envisioned. As Julie Holledge has observed, these women believed they could use Ibsen's plays with their unorthodox heroines as a vehicle for politicizing other women.⁴⁸

It was Farr's performance as Rebecca West in Ibsen's Rosmersholm mounted at the Vaudeville Theatre in February 1891 that established her reputation both as an actress and advanced woman. In a review of the play in the Illustrated London News, the critic, Clement Scott, well-known for his vehement opposition to Ibsen and Ibsenites recorded:

Ibsen will be known as the actress-maker. "A Doll's House" made the reputation of Miss Janet Achurch, and now "Rosmersholm" has brought into prominence the name of Miss Florence Farr. Half the battle of success with these plays is won by the actors and actresses. They must be enthusiasts; they must be in the religion of Ibsen; they must study him, pore over him, live in his strange theories and mysticism before they can hope to make converts. Miss Farr not only looks Rebecca but understands her. She fascinates and interests us in this strange, uncanny, and unwomanly woman. (49)

He further cited, with obvious disapproval, Farr's own view of her role:

Miss Florence Farr - has been interviewed on the subject of Ibsen's heroine, and has given her opinion very strongly. She has studied Rebecca, and she ought to know.

We are told that Rebecca West is attractive "just because she is so thoroughly womanly, and if she is not womanly then I give up my own claim to womanhood, and proclaim myself an abnormal development at the end of the century." [Scott could not resist adding] I very much fear that some of us must accept that unfortunate alternative! (50)

While it is certainly true that the women who undertook advanced roles were almost invariably firm supporters of women's equality, they were frequently represented in the press as being abnormal, sexually deviant, and undesirable creatures. As seen from Clement Scott's comments, attacks on the actress who played such parts typically treated theatrical roles as extensions of the woman's own personality. It was widely argued that to play such characters as prostitutes, adulteresses, and fornicatoresses successfully one needed personal experience. Such threats to their reputations made many women reluctant to appear in morally risky roles at all. This problem was further aggravated by long-standing taboos since it was really only during the eighties and nineties that acting as a profession had acquired any shreds of social respectability. The emergence of New Women's roles upset many in the theatrical world precisely because such parts seemed to jeopardize their newly acquired acceptable status, by rekindling old prejudices.

In his recent book, The Rise of the Victorian Actor, Michael Baker traces the slow emergence of professional practices in the theatre.⁵¹ Characterized by the late development of government subsidies, national schools for training, and self-regulating bodies for setting admission standards, the social status of the Victorian stage was very low in comparison to that of older, more established professions

(e.g. legal, military, and ecclesiastic). Even in relation to other arts disciplines (e.g. literature and painting) acting was considered less prestigious for several reasons. Among the most important was the survival of Protestant prejudices against theatrical entertainment, particularly within the dissenting sects. Furthermore, actors/actresses were generally regarded as members of the working class from which they had largely originated during the first part of the nineteenth century. Lacking social and educational refinement, they were regarded as tradespeople earning a weekly wage instead of the more respectable fees charged by most professionals. To make matter worse, theatres were often located in urban centres where other forms of vice abounded - especially prostitution and pick-pocketing. Frequenting such disreputable parts of town inevitably exposed theatre companies to the seamier side of life. This was deemed a degrading and dangerous circumstance for young actresses who also faced a myriad of temptations through their constant unsupervised contact with the men in the cast.⁵²

Although leading West End theatres and their actor-managers had dislodged many of these negative connotations by the 1890s, the situation for most actresses who had to work their way up the ladder by starting in less desirable venues was still regarded with grave suspicion. In spite of their high salaries which few working women could match, the activities of an acting career jarred too uncomfortably with the ideals of middle-class Victorian womanhood for them to secure widespread social acceptance.⁵³ The basic contradiction between the public exhibitionism of the stage and the private domesticity of the home was

irreconcilable, as Baker has observed:

In the first place, acting on the professional stage necessarily incurred public exposure of an extreme kind. It therefore came into direct conflict with the implicitly private nature of genteel womanhood. Physical work alone, under any circumstances, was considered sufficient to degrade femininity, and hence the stigma against the mass of labouring women. But the tools of the actress's trade were her own body and emotions, attributes which she deliberately and regularly exposed to public gaze and public comment. (54)

Such exhibitionism also had important links with artifice and sexual promiscuity. Wearing make-up and unconventional clothing in public, integral parts of actress's job, were commonly associated with another major female profession - prostitution. The connection of the two occupations was frequently made throughout the Victorian period, generally discrediting the stage. A graphic illustration is provided by a cartoon entitled 'Before the Ballet' published in To-Day during 1893 (fig. 84) which shows a typical stage-door johnny complete with top hat and monocle propositioning a young ballerina. His assertion that an actress is not an actress nine times out of ten refers to the supposedly easy virtue of stage performers, and the fact that prostitutes frequently described themselves as actresses to the police and other social investigators. Finally the careerist aspirations of actresses left them open to serious criticism. Often initially motivated by financial necessity, many actresses continued their careers after marrying and having children.⁵⁶ In the 1890s, a working wife and mother was frowned upon even in many working class circles, further isolating the actress from respectable women of all social levels.

Exceptional pains to counteract this negative image and illustrate their virtue were taken by many leading women at the end of the century. The careful selection of 'womanly' roles and the strictest propriety in dress and social conduct could sometimes secure individual acceptance. Mrs. Kendal achieved a remarkable degree of success in this area, being invited to family teas with the upper echelons of the aristocracy.⁵⁷ However, she was exceptional. More typical was the experience of Sarah Bernhardt for whom a society supper party was thrown which a large number of respectable ladies boycotted. In general, actresses paid for their greater degree of financial autonomy with a corresponding loss of status, that often alienated family members, friends and acquaintances who did not share their stage life.⁵⁸

If the life of an ordinary actress was frequently difficult, that of one specializing in the New Theatre was doubly trying. Employment opportunities were limited and normally less financially rewarding. Although new plays often received extensive press coverage, much of the publicity was adverse. Acquiring an advanced reputation was not only a personal liability since it also hindered one from securing traditional, more remunerative parts. Under these circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that actresses who tackled such roles possessed a special dedication and drive which was the subject of much merciless criticism.

Ridicule was also heaped on the consumers of such 'new' plays. Ibsenite audiences were often portrayed as collections of social misfits

which a caricature 'Ibsenite Pitites' (fig. 85) and its accompanying description made obvious:

On the afternoon of the production of Rosmersholm at the Vaudeville, I went into the pit and upstairs to get among the audience to see what Ibsenites were like. Never before, except at an entertainment for the mentally or physically afflicted - at an asylum concert or hospital treat - had I encountered so many deformed faces; so many men and women pale, sad-looking, white-lipped. It was like an assemblage of out-patients waiting for the doctor. I seemed to feel in the midst of unhealth, chronic feebleness of the body, which could expect no help from the brain. (59)

The men at such affairs were usually stereotyped as either immoral corruptors of women and youth or weak-willed effeminate fools. As 'Ibsenite Pitites' demonstrates, the women were commonly portrayed as unattractive, middle-aged spinsters. All were sexually and socially deviant, as Clement Scott was quick to notice in another of his tirades:

The unwomanly woman, the unsexed females, and the whole army of unprepossessing cranks in petticoats...sit open-mouthed and without a blush on their faces, whilst a Socialist orator reads aloud Ghosts, the most loathsome of all Ibsen's plays. (60)

Even in the gentler cartoons of women's magazines, the Ibsenite female was more often than not an object of pity. In 'The Ibsen Girl's Holiday' (fig. 86) published in a June 1894 issue of Woman, a fashionably dressed, solitary young woman is shown at the sea-side clutching her copy of the playwright's work. The characteristic glasses reveal her intellectual inclination. In this instance, the possession of a brain has not ruined her appearance, but does seem to be interfering with her fun. In the distance, presumably normal, non-Ibsenite women are happily engaged in walking and talking with men. The Ibsen girl's wistful expression suggests that in spite of all pretences, Ibsen is really no substitute

for male attention.

Undaunted by the predominantly adverse reception of Rosmersholm, Florence Farr continued to play the leading women in a series of hazardous ventures throughout the 1890s, notably appearing in: two earlier plays of Todhunter's The Poison Flower and A Sicilian Idyll in 1891, the first production of Shaw's Widower's Houses for the Independent Theatre in 1892, and his slightly more successful Arms and the Man in 1894.⁶¹ Farr was quite frank about her support for the cause of New Theatre publicly stating her intention to produce plays which 'no ordinary management would take up'.⁶² Her position as producer at the Avenue Theatre was certainly extraordinary. Despite the fact that she was there for less than a year, Farr was one of very few women to become involved with the production and management side of a series of plays in a West End theatre during the nineteenth century.

She was only able to do so through the generous support of a highly unorthodox female financial backer, Annie Horniman. Having been left a substantial legacy in 1893 from her grandfather's estate, Annie Horniman was determined to assist the cause of the New Theatre which she avidly patronized. As a friend of Florence Farr's, she gave the money with virtually no strings attached to mount a season of plays at the Avenue Theatre. Her support remained anonymous (known only to Farr and John Todhunter) since her Quaker family strongly objected to her involvement with the stage. Horniman could certainly be classified as a New Woman - living and travelling around the world alone, wearing rational

dress, riding a bicycle for many years, and eventually starting theatres in Dublin and Manchester.⁶³

Although leading ladies abounded, they usually lacked the capital, business expertise, and confidence to produce plays and run theatres. Instead they worked under actor-managers who fulfilled the triple role of managing, directing, and acting. This effectively meant that actresses had little control over the selection of plays for the company repertoire. Such a situation had serious implications for advanced plays which often contained leading male roles that the average actor-manager did not find flattering. This point was satirized in a cartoon from an April 1894 issue of To-Day (fig. 87) which exposed the theatrical establishment's conspiracy to exclude New Plays. A supernaturally large woman carrying a new play is shown thrusting her way into a theatre much to the dismay of two male guardians of the status-quo.

George Bernard Shaw who had enormous difficulty getting his early plays commercially staged believed that '...the time was ripe for the advent of the actress-manageress'.⁶⁴ He argued that only by assuming direct control of theatre managements could actresses (and progressive playwrights like himself) fully develop their potential:

...it is just such peculiarities [roles that expose male vanity, and complacency] that make characteristically modern plays as repugnant to the actor as they are attractive to the actress, and that, consequently, the actress who is content to remain attached to an actor-manager as "leading lady" forfeits all chance of creating any of the fascinating women's parts which come at intervals of two years from the Ibsen mint. (65)

This was not merely Shavian rhetoric since Florence Farr had produced and starred in his Arms and the Man at the Avenue Theatre only a few months before the above was written.⁶⁶

If it was hard for men to get their advanced plays performed, it was virtually impossible for the few aspiring female playwrights. The male-dominated establishment severely limited their numbers in the first place since most women writers preferred to work on novels which could be written in the privacy of their homes and did not involve technical staging requirements. The few actresses who wrote plays during this period usually did so anonymously. Elizabeth Robins and Lady Bell who jointly wrote Alan's Wife, a very advanced play about a mother smothering her deformed child deliberately kept their identities secret to prevent the play being patronizingly dismissed as the work of women. Performed by the Independent Theatre in 1893 with Robins in the leading role establishment critics generally found it as disgusting and unacceptable as Ibsen's plays.⁶⁷ One can scarcely imagine how they would have reacted had they known the play was by two women.

Regarding the advanced nature of A Comedy of Sighs Farr was characteristically outspoken. During an interview for the Sketch which reproduced both Beardsley's poster design and a photograph of Farr,⁶⁸ (fig. 88), the journalist recorded:

The latest recruit to the world of London theatrical managers was sitting at a workmanlike table, studying the rough proof of the charming design which Mr. Aubrey Beardsley has just completed to serve as an advertisement to Dr. Todhunter's new play.

"You see, we are nothing if not advanced," began the future Lady Brandon [leading female part], merrily. "Up to the present time, no advanced play has ever yet been properly mounted in London. I ought to know something about the matter, for I have acted in many of them. (69)

Judging from reviewer's accounts of the play, the public was less than delighted. One writer described the opening night continuing despite "...a running fire of interruption and scornful comment on the part of the pit and gallery".⁷⁰ According to several middle-class writers, the working class' condemnation of the performance was a wise verdict, albeit crudely expressed. Evidently the middle-class was seriously divided: the majority siding with the pit and gallery as opposed to what one critic called the 'Bedford Park contingent':

A drama of actual life A Comedy of Sighs, dispensing with all aid of situation and set tableau, and depending wholly upon psychology is calculated - when supported by clever and cynical dialogue - to interest a cultivated class of playgoers. Of such however the audience on Thursday in last week was not wholly composed. Stalwart and loyal, Bedford Park sent an enthusiastic contingent, the cheers of which, in the long run, prevailed over the discontented manifestations of the gods. Discontented the gods were, and not without cause. (71)

The fact that New Theatre did not interest the working class was frequently pointed out by conservative reviewers. Challenging Farr's attempts to reach the 'poor' in 1891, Clement Scott wrote with confidence:

Is Miss Florence Farr right in her estimate when she says? - "Smart people are so much more human and so much less conventional; and the poor, if only I could get at them, would be sure to understand and feel and appreciate." This is not at all my idea of life. I don't see overmuch humanity in smart people, but the poor and downtrodden are the most sentimental and human people on the face of God's earth. (72)

In some respects, Clement Scott was depressingly astute. Like the

majority of New Women's novels, such plays only seemed relevant to a limited number of discontented middle-class intellectuals, even when they reached a working class audience on rare occasions. This left them open to the charges of elitism that conservative critics were so fond of making. Inevitably, such avant-garde products played a reformist role within the establishment, but never developed a strong enough grass roots constituency to mount a serious challenge to the existing social order.

On the whole, Farr's presentation of Lady Brandon's restless love affairs aroused little sympathy from reviewers who saw no excuse for her behaviour considering she was married to a devoted man and pregnant.⁷³ Even William Archer, whose support could usually be counted on, was forced to admit the piece was badly written, poorly acted, and basically heavy-handed:

Dr. Todhunter's intention in A Comedy of Sighs seems to have been to get the scent of Keynotes over the footlights, and some pretty strong whiffs of it certainly reached the nostrils. (74)

Closing after two weeks and only sixteen performances, the venture was scarcely a success.⁷⁵

Nevertheless from the last week of March until the middle of April, Beardsley's poster (fig. 83) attracted an amount of publicity seldom given to theatrical advertising.⁷⁶ The design was divided in half: the right carrying the title of the theatre and information about the play, the left displaying a woman standing behind a partially open spotted curtain. Printed in white, blue, and green, half-tones were created by

the application of tiny blue dots over the curtain's surface. Wearing a low cut evening dress which fully exposed her shoulders, the woman physically confronted the viewer, although her gaze was directed off towards her right.

While many critics admired Beardsley's clever use of outline and the poster's overall decorative effect, they found the woman disconcerting. The most outraged responses came from the penny press ranging from the Globe which considered her 'unnecessarily repulsive in facial type' to the horrified outburst of the Pelican which described her as 'bilious lack-a-daisical, back-boneless, aenemic, 'utter' and generally disagreeable-looking....'⁷⁷ These assertions of sickness and physical decay recall the previous description of the 'mentally and physically afflicted' audience of Rosmersholm. Although, as discussed in the first section, it was common for establishment writers to indiscriminately ascribe the attributes of degeneration to a wide range of alternative social groups (e.g. New Women, socialists) in this case the vocabulary of disease seems to have carried the rather more specific connotations of prostitution which were the focus of a Punch caricature.

Entitled 'Let's Ave A Nue Poster' (fig. 89), Beardsley's woman was reproduced almost identically in Punch, except for the exaggerated addition of a gruesome thick-lipped grimace. An accompanying poem on the same page by Owen Seaman dwelled on the woman's evil sensuality, comparing it to the virtue of 'A simple maid au naturel'. Throughout inferences were made to the woman's outcast status: her sidelong eyes which evade the

viewer, her giddy guise, something about her throat (her low cut dress) that should not be seen, and something about her lips (their sensuous fullness) which should not be mentioned. Finally Seaman suggested the artist find a 'Live, shapely, possible and clean' model, in contrast to this woman of a Comedy of Leers. Without her occupation being explicitly named, Beardsley's woman was clearly characterized as a whore. Whether or not, this interpretation was intended by the artist remains uncertain, although it seems feasible considering the poster's striking resemblance to his drawings of prostitutes published later the same year in To-Day and the Yellow Book⁷⁸

The poster's dual connotations of the unsexed New Woman and lascivious prostitute is not quite as surprising^{as} it initially appears. Despite their superficial opposition, these two stereotyped categories of women had much in common. Both forfeited their claim to womanhood by behaving in a sexually deviant fashion: the former rejecting conventional heterosexual relationships and the latter charging for them. In terms of the New Theatre, both were portrayed as the victims of male oppression. Furthermore, attempting to satisfy their own desires by taking the initiative in sexual relationships, New Women were frequently compared to soliciting street-walkers. The flip-side of the New Woman's unconventionality was the prostitute's promiscuity. The point was emphasized in one of the period's most notorious plays, Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, in which the behaviour of the heroine, Paula Tanqueray (a reformed prostitute) was so startling^{ly} unorthodox that it hastened her impending destruction.⁷⁹

This conflation of old and new in the Avenue poster seems to disrupt prevailing sexual stereotypes of the late nineteenth century. The use of seductive women on London theatre posters was a well established practice as Jan Van Beers poster for La Cigale at the Lyric Theatre of 1890 demonstrates (fig. 90).⁸⁰ This woman's shapely figure, long flowing hair, inviting gaze and exposed arms present her to the viewer as an object of male sexual pleasure. Beardsley takes this traditional vocabulary and turns it to new account by expressing it in the unfamiliar language of a hard-edged style. While the three dimensional modelling and naturalistic colouring of Van Beer's lithograph makes the woman seem soft, alluring and available, Beardsley's flatly outlined figure in blue and green conveys a more complex sexuality that is resistant and even threatening. One critic described the Avenue woman as 'forbidding', 'uncanny' and 'inhuman'.⁸¹ The superiority and possession conferred on Victorian male viewers by the Lyric poster evidently gave way to confusion and dislocation in the Avenue design. These were uncomfortable sensations that would have been reinforced by the type of play the poster advertised.

It should be noted that both of these theatre posters bordered dangerously on the National Vigilance Association's definition of the obscene. In 1890 a crusade was launched to pressure the Royal Aquarium music-hall to withdraw its poster advertising Zaeo, a female acrobat (fig. 91). Shown in a gymnastic outfit with bare arms and legs, Zaeo was posed with both hands clasped behind her head apparently ready to jump from a

trapeze, according to a description of the poster by William Coote, the Secretary of the N.V.A.⁸² The problem seems to have revolved around her bare lower limbs and the indecency of the pose which was reminiscent of certain pornographic conventions. Ruling that the Indecent Advertisements Act did not apply, the ruling magistrate nevertheless agreed the poster was indecent and sent a policeman to the Royal Aquarium's management to pressure them to remove or alter the design. Agreeing to alterations (i.e. clothing Zaeo's legs) only if the N.V.A. would pay the costs of the new printing and posting (at higher levels to avoid 'disgusting' defacements), the management was meanwhile profiting enormously for the publicity. During the period some quarter of a million copies of the Zaeo poster were sold, as Edward Bristow has observed, making ^{it one} of the most famous posters of the century.⁸³ Finally the poster was withdrawn after pressure was exerted on the London County Council to threaten the Royal Aquarium with losing its licence unless the management complied. As a direct outcome of the trial a London Bill Poster's Protection Association was formed from representatives of the advertisers who agreed to police themselves and withdraw posters if the N.V.A. requested. While Beardsley's design avoided the extremes of exposed lower limbs and controversial 'pin-up' posing, the Avenue woman's dangerously plunging neckline and barred arms possibly reminded viewers of the notorious Zaeo photograph. Certainly Punch's references to Hardy's posters for To-Day and St. Paul's raised the N.V.A.'s perennial complaints about the indecency of modern hoardings.

Before leaving this section and turning to the Yellow Book, it is

worth noting how quickly Beardsley's style became associated with advanced actresses and playwrights. His Avenue design was recycled for Farr's next production of George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man⁸⁴. In a review of Shaw's piece published in April 1894, Florence Farr who played Louka was hideously caricatured as a New Woman (fig. 92). The waving tentacles of her hair and grotesque bits of anatomy decorating her costume were clearly parodies of Beardsley's style. Interestingly, none of the actors were subjected to a similar treatment. In many respects, the accusations levelled at Shaw's play in the text of this review parallel those directed towards Beardsley's images. Shaw was charged with upsetting the relationship of good and evil by presenting humans with a superficial virtuous veneer:

If the fantastic title of "A Comedy of Masks" had not already been made the prey of another man, it would have been as apt for Mr. Shaw's work as the title it now wears. Assume the virtues, or what we call the virtues, to be masks indifferently well painted, and that behind the human animal is very much the same - lewd, cunning, heartless, and cruel according to the best of its ability... (85)

As in the case of Shaw's New Theatre, this representation of evil was to become an obsessive concern in the reviewers' treatment of Beardsley's subsequent theatrical illustrations for the Yellow Book.

V Mrs. Patrick Campbell

In the middle of April, while Beardsley's Avenue poster was still on public display, the Yellow Book's first volume made its debut. It

contained two pictures of stage-performers - Beardsley's portrait of Mrs. Patrick Campbell (fig. 93) and Walter Sickert's 'Old Oxford Music Hall'. Both initiated a series of similar subjects spread over the first four volumes: Beardsley illustrating an actress in each issue, and Sickert contributing a total of six music hall scenes. The second volume contained additional theatrical material in the form of an article on the French actress, Rejane, and Francis Forster's portrait of Olga Nethersole in her leading role as Sylvia in The Transgressor. These two categories of performers - the high-brow actresses of West End, society dramas by Beardsley and Forster, and the working class, music-hall entertainers by Sickert, were condemned by most of the press who saw them as two sides of a decadent coin.

At this stage, for the sake of thematic unity, these two groups will be discussed individually to provide a comprehensive analysis of their signification in the mid 1890s. To some extent culling similar subjects from the four volumes runs the risk of removing the images from their location in separate issues that were released at quarterly intervals. Although critics compared new volumes with their predecessors, their opinions were also shaped by surrounding events. The shifting climate of public opinion is important to chart during a year of recurring moral panics (e.g. the Empire Promenade Scandal, the trial of Wilde). In order to avoid freezing history in a static cross-sectional mould, particular events will be discussed at length in cases where they appear to have affected the response to the Yellow Book. Likewise, attention will be paid to those instances where pictures were played off against

other items in the same volume. Bearing these considerations firmly in mind, one can turn to examine the individual illustrations.

Probably most condemned of all Beardsley's submissions to the Yellow Book was the picture of Mrs. Patrick Campbell (fig. 93).⁸⁶ The actress is shown in side profile wearing an up-to-date afternoon dress, hat and gloves. The simply outlined forms of her face, hands, and clothing contrast with the dense black mass of her hair and hat. Her tall, slender proportions extend almost the full height and half the width of the framed blank space of the background.

Although only her name was given, critics immediately recognized that Campbell was portrayed as Paula in the Second Mrs. Tanqueray. This was the theatrical coup of 1893 that made her reputation as well as that of the playwright, Arthur W. Pinero. Produced by George Alexander who also played the leading male part of Aubrey Tanqueray, the play opened at the St. James Theatre on May 27, 1893, and ran for 223 performances until March 24, 1894.⁸⁷ Subsequently taken on provincial tour, the St. James' production was certainly the most widely publicized theatrical event of the season. The full text of the play was later published by Heinemann in 1894.⁸⁸

The extent of the play's commercial success initially took the playwright, producer, and cast by surprise. Pinero had felt that the theme was too advanced to become anything more than an artistic achievement which would close after a few matinees.⁸⁹ The play had

been rejected by John Hare, manager of the Garrick Theatre, before Alexander agreed to produce it.⁹⁰ Pinero worried about the plot which recounted the story of a widower's (Aubrey Tanqueray) second marriage to an ex-prostitute (Paula Ray). Through a series of revelations, notably the engagement of Aubrey's daughter to one of Paula's former clients, Paula realized that she could not escape her past and committed suicide. Several leading members of the cast also experienced doubts, including Cyril Maude, who played the role of Cayley Drummele, an old friend of Aubrey Tanqueray. Maude later recalled his uneasiness:

I remember we marvelled than at Alexander even having been able to get it [the play] past the Censor....I don't remember if I was more elated than I was terrified at having to play the part of Cayley - a delightful part, though with an extraordinarily trying scene in the first act. I had to tell the whole story of Paula's life and describe things which up till that time had rarely, if ever, been mentioned on the English stage. (91)

Furthermore, there had been much debate over the selection of an actress who could handle the difficult task of representing a courtesan on stage. Various advanced actresses such as Olga Nethersole, Janet Achurch and Elizabeth Robins were initially considered. Already committed to other ventures, Pinero and Alexander eventually settled on Campbell whose previous experience was mainly in comedies at the less prestigious Adelphi Theatre in Strand.⁹² Yet despite these anxieties, the foundation of the play's success actually seems to have rested on its combination of a risqué subject and conventional moral conclusion which effectively appealed to both the Bedford Park circle and suburban bourgeois.

While the conservative majority of reviewers were shocked by

Pinero's subject matter, they found the play's didactic ending deeply satisfying. Paula's death which denied her access to respectable society, also perpetuated the prevailing Victorian mythology of the fallen women's inexorable downward path from seduction to suicide.⁹³ As the Times critic observed:

The new St. James's play may be unpleasant in its theme - this indeed, it is -...but it is written with undeniable power, and is worked out to its tragic issue with a stern inflexible logic which fully atones for what may at first appear the somewhat gratuitous offer of the author to take his audience for a stroll in Regent-street by night. (94)

Such writers praised Pinero for selecting a case study that explained prostitution as the individual moral failing of weak women. The Athenaeum's comments were typical:

The theory that there is no salvation for the woman that has fallen is familiar and jejune. It is accentuated in the present case by the manner in which the woman recognizes that the obstacles spring from within, and takes upon herself the responsibility for her own defeat....

Part-one consists of the revelation of a shallow, impressionable, self-willed, and hysterical nature; part two of the punishment, self-earned and inevitable, that is meted out to it. (95)

Since female moral lapses led prostitution, the example of Paula's suicide was considered an appropriate lesson to those in danger of temptation. By confining their analysis to an individual level, these writers conspicuously avoided any of the broader social issues detected by their more progressive counterparts.

On the other hand, advanced critics such as Archer and Shaw were excited by this serious exploration of a previously tabooed subject, but

dismayed by the unnecessarily moralizing and highly contrived ending.

Archer argued that:

It would perhaps have been bolder and better simply to have left the thing at a loose end, dropping the curtain upon Mr. and Mrs. Tanqueray's determination to go abroad and try to make a fresh start,... (96)

Neither of them accepted prostitution as an irreversable fate. Furthermore, they felt the play raised larger social questions concerning the nature of women's sexuality, the necessity of purity before marriage and the double standard of respectable society which recognized the men who patronized outcast prostitutes.

The burst of excitement surrounding the opening night and Campbell's rapid rise to stardom, temporarily obscured these fundamental differences. London's middle-class playgoers were thrilled by the apparent revitalization of English drama. Photographs and interviews of Campbell and Alexander appeared in the theatre columns of daily and sixpenny weekly papers throughout the run of the play.⁹⁷ Beardsley evidently participated in the enthusiasm as a letter from Oscar Wilde published in Campbell's memoirs indicates:

Dear Mrs. Campbell,

Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, a very brilliant and wonderful young artist and a great admirer of the wonder and charm of your art, says he must have the honour of being presented to you, if you will allow it. So, with your gracious sanction, I will come round after Act III with him, and you would gratify and honour him much if you would let him bow his compliments to you. He has just illustrated my play Salomé for me, and has a copy of the edition de luxe which he wants to lay at your feet.

His drawings are quite wonderful.

Very sincerely yours,

Oscar Wilde ⁹⁸

Campbell did not record her impression of Beardsley, but one assumes they must have been favourable because later in February 1894, Beardsley wrote to her confirming an engagement for a sitting at the St. James Theatre.⁹⁹ The artist was evidently pleased with the resulting illustration for the Yellow Book judging from his subsequent comment to Lane that in the process of being transferred on to line blocks for printing, 'The Second Mrs. T. has come off splendidly.'¹⁰⁰

However, the picture which was released at the height of Campbell's success, angered virtually all press reviewers who singled it out for attack. Their language on this occasion was even more outraged than was usually the case with Beardsley's works. The Athenaeum suggested the portrait was 'libellous' while the Westminster Gazette went further proposing:

that other thing to which the name of Mrs. Patrick Campbell has somehow become attached, we do not know that anything would meet the case except a short Act of Parliament to make this kind of thing illegal. (101)

Repeatedly reviewers charged Beardsley with impertinently and grotesquely misrepresenting Campbell. The Daily Chronicle turned the incident into a public joke by claiming to have received a reviewer's copy accidentally missing this plate. When Beardsley naively sent a letter of apology with the picture, the editor replied:

Our copy it is true, contained a female figure in the space thus described, but we rated Mrs. Patrick Campbell's appearance and Mr. Beardsley's talent far too high to suppose that they were united on this

occasion. (102)

The picture was considered inappropriate for several reasons. Many critics felt cheated by what they regarded as a mere caricature instead of the work of art an expensive magazine like the Yellow Book should have delivered. The St. James Gazette indignantly discussed the work as 'not even a thumb-nail sketch' of a 'half -dozen lines of arrangement', while the Spectator felt it 'scarcely rises to the dignity of a caricature' let alone the portrait status claimed by its title.¹⁰³ As connoisseurs, the majority of reviewers asserted that Beardsley had clearly not put in enough time and effort to justify the magazine's artistic pretensions and prices.

On one level this was an understandable complaint since such simple sketches of stage personalities usually accompanied regular play reviews serving an illustrative, not artistic function. A typical example of the widespread use of these drawings appeared in the theatrical column of the Pall Mall Gazette (fig. 94). In a review of The Masqueraders which succeeded The Second Mrs. Tangueray at the St. James Theatre, a brief sketch of Campbell enlivened the text. Characteristic of its type, the drawing had much in common with Beardsley's illustration, including the side profile, costume details, and blank background. Although it was smaller and not presented as a work of art in its own right (i.e. framed and separated from the text), few critics could have avoided making this type of comparison.

Another simple outline sketch which reviewers may have compared

with Beardsley's illustration was the fashion-plate, an item widely used in both woman's magazines and regular fashion columns during the 1890s. A comparable example of the same date is provided by a dress suggestion published in Woman (fig. 95). Although fashion illustrators usually attempted to give the model a greater three-dimensionality through the use of shading, again the profile, costume details, and flatteringly elongated and slender proportions recall Beardsley's picture. The striking resemblance to such quickly produced and commonly available pictures only could have detracted from the artistic status of Mrs. Campbell.

Yet the scanty linear quality of Beardsley's design, albeit irritating, was not really the basis of critical dissatisfaction. In fact, in the same volume, unfinished works of a suitable type were singled out for extensive praise. A case in point was Leighton's chalk study (fig. 96) which secured almost universal approval. In comparison, Beardsley's contributions suffered, as the Times observed:

...Sir Frederick Leighton, who contributes two graceful studies, finds himself cheek by jowl with such advanced and riotous representatives of the New Art as Mr. Aubrey Beardsley and Mr. Walter Sickert. (104)

Among others sharing these sentiments, the Daily Chronicle observed, 'Sir Frederick Leighton's noble draped figures are doubly welcome in an atmosphere of artistic decadence', and the Westminster Gazette commented with feeling, 'After these [Beardsley's pictures] it is balm to sore eyes to turn to Sir Frederick Leighton's studies...'¹⁰⁵ Academic studies of classical subjects by the eminent President of the Royal Academy were a different matter.

Of course a large part of this prejudice simply stemmed from Leighton's lofty standing, and the traditional superiority of oil-painting (and related studies) to the humbler medium of pen and ink drawing. After all, studies for oil-paintings were supposed to look unfinished. The infamous illustrator of Wilde's Salomé could scarcely hope to command the respect enjoyed by the President of the Royal Academy, at least from the established press. For our purposes, however, more interesting than these rather obvious factors, were the reviewer's underlying anxieties about the actual physical characteristics of Beardsley's actress which connoted a rather different type of woman from the Leighton variety endlessly pictured by academicians.

The Leighton variety refers to a popular sort of academic painting that depicted noticeably curved female bodies of a medium build, revealingly draped or naked, in a vaguely classical or exotic setting. Theoretically, the distancing of the woman in terms of time and place, along with references to her innocence and purity transformed her nakedness into artistically acceptable nudity. As Fraser Harrison has noted, the pictures generally presented women either as passive objects of male sexual pleasure in a condition of 'defenceless and self-observing nakedness' or in states of 'helpless dependence on male enterprise'.¹⁰⁶ Leighton's frontispiece for the Yellow Book (fig. 96) was in fact a study for just such a picture - Summer Slumber (fig. 97) which was exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1894. Here the sleeping woman whose innocence is guarded by the statuesque classical

figure is stretched out suggestively before the viewer. If the critics reviewing the Yellow Book had not yet seen Leighton's picture at the Academy, they certainly would have been familiar with his conventional representations of women.

Having admired Leighton's contributions, the majority of critics objected to Mrs. Campbell's proportions which were regarded as excessively tall and thin. Even the otherwise laudatory review by Philip Hamerton published in the second Yellow Book, described the actress as a giraffe.¹⁰⁷ The World critic wrote disparagingly of her 'hunchy shoulders; a happily impossible waist, and a yard and a half of indefinite skirt'.¹⁰⁸ E. T. Reed's cartoon in Punch (fig. 98) also ridiculed Campbell's proportions depicting her as an emaciated skeleton with empty eye sockets and protruding facial, shoulder and finger bones that seemed about to break through the skin. The morbid and satanic qualities of the Punch cartoon were reinforced by the transformation of the flower in her hair into an ugly grotesque. The caption 'Played Out; or the 252nd Mrs. Tanqueray' implied the actress had been worked to the bone during the play's long run. In this case, the typically conservative and highly chauvinist humour of Punch satirized the success of the play, by exaggerating the disturbing aspects of Beardsley's picture.¹⁰⁹

The Granta's mocking poem (fig. 99) also concentrated on these problems of scale, denouncing Beardsley for making the actress nine feet high. The poem specifically criticized the artist for 'picturing' not 'drawing'. Here drawing was equated with natural canons and 'normal'

women while picturing seemed to imply unnatural decorative proportions that were less suitable for rendering the human form:

Inform us, Aubrey is it art
 To twist and warp the human figure;
 Diminish thus the upper part,
 And make the lower four times bigger,...?¹¹⁰

According to the Granta writer Beardsley's drawing was not only unnatural but also unchristian. The fourth verse referred to Christ's admonition to his disciples to place spiritual matters above material concerns in Mathew 6:27 'And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature'. Here the Granta critic accuses Beardsley of altering nature in a way that good Christians would be unable or unwilling to do. Curiously the Granta writer substitutes 'stater' for stature possibly to fit the rhyme scheme, but perhaps also to criticize Beardsley's materialistic motives since stater is a term for ancient Greek coinage.

The extreme thinness of Beardsley's illustration was disconcerting because it evidently forced an unpleasantly advanced interpretation of Paula on to reviewers who preferred to see her simply as a doomed prostitute. In other words, the illustration highlighted Paula's role as a struggling but socially victimized New Woman. Although slender proportions were an integral part of marketing the coventionally fashionable women, in excess, they were a hallmark of unnatural, artificial New Women. The New Woman's demands for education, social equality, meaningful employment, and freedom from the tyranny of continuous childbirth were constantly dismissed as unnatural by her opponents.¹¹¹ Defying the laws of nature, the New Woman threatened

the family and procreation. Her lack of feminine maternal qualities was believed to stem from genetic deficiencies, as Lynn Linton, a notorious antifeminist, outlined in 1891:

Like certain "sports" which develop hybrid characteristics, these insurgent wild women are in a sense unnatural. They have not "bred true" - not according to the general lines on which the normal woman is constructed. There is in them a curious inversion of sex, which does not necessarily appear in the body, but is evident enough in the mind. Quite as disagreeable as the bearded chin, the bass voice, flat chest, and lean hips of a woman who has failed in her rightful development, the unfeminine ways and works of the wild woman of politics are even worse for the world in which they live. (112)

Similarly in New Women's literature, sympathetic writers developed a physical stereotype of the advanced heroine as a thin creature often plagued by neuroses and nervous disorders which stemmed from the pressures of living in a hostile society.¹¹³ This type of emancipated woman was typified by Sue Bridehead in Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure written in 1893-1894 and published in 1895. Hardy described his heroine as

...the woman of the feminist movement - the slight pale 'batchelor' girl - the intellectualized bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in the cities as yet; who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession, and boast themselves to be superior people because they are licensed to be loved on the premises. (114)

Other writers who presented this type of heroine included George Egerton, Emma Frances Brooke, Mona Caird, and M'enie Muriel Dowie.¹¹⁵ Invariably their heroines were described as thin, highly strung, and sensitive.

However, nervous disorders and anxiety were not the only causes of

what was considered an inordinate thinness. Another main contributor was 'tight-lacing'. In a recent book on the subject, David Kunzle has suggested that although the corset was developed and primarily used to modify the female body for male pleasure, from the late 1840s onwards, extreme forms of tight lacing carried public connotations of female defiance.¹¹⁶ Kunzle explains these paradoxical implications of the corset:

The slender waist suggests the romantic and ethereal, the pure and the virginal, all qualities which appeal to man's erotic imagination. The anti-maternalism (or paternalism) it also embodies, insofar as it denies, defies or even reverses the idea of pregnancy, is another matter, with far-reaching (and scandalous) social implications. (117)

The issue became a much publicized bone of contention with numerous articles defending and attacking the practice appearing in such newspapers and journals as the Times, Punch and Englishwomen's Domestic Magazine. As Kunzle significantly observes, feminists were not particularly interested in the issue, but members of the conservative male establishment were. Vehement opposition to the practice was expressed during the 1880s and 1890s by a number of physicians who attacked tight-lacers on two basic grounds: first for ruining their health and ability to bear children, and second for flaunting their sexuality. Although undeniably true that in extreme cases tight-lacing was used as a last resort to conceal, and even abort unwanted pregnancies, the hysterical nature of the outburst suggests the writers were primarily using the issue to counter growing demands for sexual equality by reasserting the 'natural' domestic, child-bearing, role of women.

According to Kunzle, tight-lacing seems to have been primarily practised by women of the lower-middle class - that aspirant social group for whom it was crucial to display outward signs of a leisured status which in reality they lacked. In their eyes, the corset and fashionable clothing signified a lady's distance from manual labour.

By the nineteenth century cheap mass produced corsets were specifically advertised as suitable for tight-lacing. The incidence of the practice among workers, servants, shop assistants, courtesans, and lower-middle-class women generally was sufficiently marked, especially towards the end of the century, for reformers to be able to stigmatize it as "the very badge of vulgarity". (118)

Ironically, it was not ladies but rather working women selling their appearance on a cash basis who most often resorted to the practice. In an article in the Westminster Budget in 1895, a Regent Street corset-maker explained:

It is 'fast' people, and uneducated ones, almost exclusively, who now disfigure themselves by wearing stays too tight for them, but it is not the fashion among ladies to do so. (119)

It seems worth noting that the accompanying illustration by Rackham (fig. 100) connected corset wearing to the application of make-up and the flaunting of sexuality. Rackham specifically shows a group of young women heavily made-up and tightly corseted with one figure in the right foreground possibly applying some lipstick. Such cosmetic artificiality frequently carried vice-ridden connotations as will be discussed in a moment in connection with Beardsley's image of 'La Dame Aux Camelias'. Here Rackham adds the misogynist element of mocking the patently unattractive older woman who harbours the illusion of being beautiful and admires herself in a mirror. He does so in a typically

male chauvinist way by making the young women behave cattily towards the elder one - implying that women are inherently cruel to each other, competitive, and obsessed with appearances. Another group of 'fast' women infamous for their tight stays during the 1890s were actresses. This point was made somewhat brutally in another Rackham caricature entitled 'King Death on the Stage' (fig. 101) also from the Westminster Budget which recounted the tale of a pantomime actress killing herself by lacing too tightly. Journalists' morbid fascination with such cases seems to have been a form of prurient voyeurism that simultaneously reinforced the notion that deviant sexually assertive women came to a bad end.

In her role as a courtesan, Beardsley's image of Mrs. Campbell which emphasized her thinness must have proven doubly disconcerting, making both the subject of Pinero's play and her own status as an actress appear unromantically vulgar to the predominantly high Society and upper-middle class audience of the St. James Theatre.¹²⁰ It is important to realize that despite its daring subject, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray fell into the established genre of Society dramas or problem plays. The well known fact that this genre was predominantly the property of the upper-middle class was made by Du Maurier in one of his typical high Society cartoons, 'The Problem Play' which located the consumers of such plays at a fashionable ladies tea-party (fig. 102). Although, as the cartoon shows, only a sector of this class championed the problem play (versus light entertainment), for the most part its adherents preferred such works enacted in the pretty settings of Society drawing-rooms. Despite the fact that the press felt Pinero had handled Paula's activities

as a prostitute with considerable decorum in the play by discussing her past from the comfortable distance of polite society, they found Beardsley's illustration too immediate. The third verse of the Granta's satirical poem accused the artist of stirring up Japan with Leicester Square - the former referring to his flat linear style, and the latter to the notorious centre of prostitution surrounding the Alhambra and Empire music-halls.¹²¹ Adding to the existing weight of actresses' generally dubious character and the dangerous theme of the play, Mrs. Campbell's inordinate slimness set off against a blank background upset the precarious moral balance.

The complete absence of background in Beardsley's picture sharply differentiated it from the numerous photographic representations of the play which appeared throughout the press. A photograph published in the Sketch (fig. 103) reveals everything from an oil-lamp on the table to the exact pattern of a dining-room chair. In this photograph, Paula/Campbell is firmly situated in a drawing-room context that diminishes her outcast status. This reproduction of minutiae of society lifestyles was enthusiastically received by West End audiences who felt it made the play 'realistic'. In other words, it basically corresponded to their lived experience, reinforcing rather than challenging their class position and its ideological limitations. From the middle of the 1880s onwards, this passion for detail became an obsession, as one playgoer of the period explained:

...we wish also to witness what we call a mise-en-scene so perfect that we may enjoy some faint illusion into the bargain. As the coats and dresses of the ladies and

gentlemen on the stage are made by the same tailors and milliners show make the coats and dresses of the ladies and gentlemen in society, so do we expect that the furniture shall be an exact likeness of that seen in the drawing-rooms of the West End. If Old English decorations and Queen Anne architecture are the vogue in real life, we must have them on the stage. Nothing must be left to the imagination, and unless the eye and ear can immediately perceive it all, it is not supposed to be there. The more familiar the scene the better. (122)

Of course the precise details of life-styles below the middle-class watershed were not so zealously recorded. They were sordid, not 'realistic'. In the case of Pinero's play, the careful focus on bourgeois social ritual seems to have defused the threat of prostitution, transforming sexual and economic exploitation into a crisis of middle-class conscience and manners.

In contrast, the starkness of Beardsley's figure of Campbell removed from any context, seems to have resisted such comforting illusions. The clarity of form can perhaps be compared to the frequent criticisms of over-explicitness levelled at New Women's literature. These writers were repeatedly condemned for focusing on the 'sex problem' to the virtual exclusion of everything else. Janet Hogarth in an article attacking decadence pinpointed the problem:

A want of balance, a deficient sense of proportion with a resulting lack of humour, and a total absence of any sort of reticence in the expression of emotion, are its [fin-de-siecle literature's] most characteristic notes. Nothing could be farther from the well-balanced serenity of the classical spirit, with its instinct for proportion and its love of restraint. (123)

Again, as in the case of Leighton, the classical ideal is the measuring-rod used to assess degrees of unhealthy deviance.¹²⁴

Finally it should be emphasized that the presence and absence of background detail cannot simply be ascribed to the different mediums of photography and drawing. This point is demonstrated by the portrait of Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Paula Tanqueray by Solomon J. Solomon exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1894 (fig. 104). Widely reproduced in connection with Academy reviews, it appeared on the cover of the Pall Mall Budget on May 10, 1894. Later recalling her popularity at the time of the exhibition, Campbell recorded:

At the Academy, too, I was mobbed. I was with Mr. Philip Burne-Jones; he managed my escape through a side door. My portrait as "Mrs. Tanqueray", by Solomon J. Solomon, was one of the popular pictures of the year. (125)

Shown in the footlights of a drawing-room stage-set, Campbell was wearing an elaborate lace evening-dress. The surrounding details (i.e. the fur rug, ornately carved table, chair and screen) were picked out almost as carefully as in the previously discussed photograph. Although very traditional reviewers (i.e. the Times) felt the picture was only moderately successful, it was hailed enthusiastically by less prestigious but more popular middle-class papers such as the Man of the World which claimed it as 'picture of the Year'.¹²⁶ In part, this pattern of response suggests that the growing adulation of famous actresses was only just beginning to penetrate the conservative stronghold of the Royal Academy. Old-fashioned papers still preferred portraits of aristocratic ladies to this newly emerging type of middle-class heroine. The continuing doubts expressed about actresses' respectability made the

public particularly sensitive to the way that they were portrayed. Aristocratic or glamorous renditions were least contentious.¹²⁷ Although the tide of public opinion was gradually turning in favour of recognizing the upper echelons of the acting profession, such pictures as Beardsley's with its clearly less than respectable associations did not assist this development, however much it was a product of growing theatrical interest.¹²⁸ Instead it simultaneously carried older connotations of sexual immorality, and much newer ones of unnatural deviance. Contrasted with the more acceptable portrait by Solomon of the same date, Beardsley's version of Mrs. Campbell was particularly offensive to virtually all middle-class critics.

VI Rèjane

The second Beardsley actress image which appeared in the July issue fared rather differently with the critics. In fact, with only a couple of exceptions, the press found itself pleasantly surprised by the illustration of Madame Rèjane (fig. 105). Speaking for many, the Weekly Sun which was highly critical of Beardsley's women in general, noted:

An exception must be made in favour of his portrait of Mlme. Rèjane, which is as fine a piece of work in plain line drawing as we have seen for many a long day. The way in which, with wonderful economy of means, the artist has caught a characteristic attitude of the great French actress is a veritable triumph...this portrait of Mlme. Rèjane fills us with admiration,...(129)

Most critics agreed that the 'lifelike' and 'characteristic' picture of

Rèjane revealed Beardsley 'at his best'. In this case they praised his 'effective economy of means' which only three months earlier had proven so disturbing in the picture of Mrs. Campbell.¹³⁰ This complete critical about-face seems nothing short of amazing considering the similar style of the two drawings in which the outlined figures were enclosed in an identically framed blank white background. Although by July, critics would have been more familiar with Beardsley's unusual style, this alone could not have accounted for this startling reversal of opinion. Clearly other factors were at work.

Most notable was the difference between the two theatrical characters depicted. As a contemporary photograph reveals, Rèjane was drawn in the costume of Catherine, heroine of Emile Moreau and Victor Sardou's light French comedy, Madame Sans-Gêne, which played at the Gaity Theatre during June and July 1894 (fig. 106).¹³¹ The play's popularity in the previous Paris season had encouraged the French company to take their production on tour. The story traced the life of Catherine, a poor laundress, who married a soldier. During the Napoleonic period, the lives of the couple underwent a dramatic change when he was made a general and she a duchess. A hopelessly clumsy country bumpkin at court (around which much of the comedy centred), she faced losing her husband and position. Taking her case to Napoleon, all ended happily when he realized that she was the laundress who had once sheltered him from his enemies. Although some reviewers felt the plot was just a shade too banal, everyone admired Rèjane's acting and the spectacular scenes of the French Empire court:

No praise can be too warm, indeed, for the manner in which the piece is dressed and mounted. It is a miracle of lavish expenditure, archaeological accuracy, and artistic judgment. (132)

This was mainstream West End theatre at its best.

Once again, Beardsley capitalized on a fad, releasing his illustration while the play was still being performed and interest in the French actress was at its height. Henry Harland also recognized the advantage of including material on R jane in the second issue, writing to John Lane in June that 'R jane is coming to London where she will be the theatrical sensation of the hour.'¹³³ The strategy that had failed Beardsley previously was strikingly successful the second time around largely because R jane was a French actress starring in a conventional play. The fact that she was French was crucial since French culture was measured by an entirely different set of moral criteria. Traditionally considered the source of avant-garde and bohemian movements (including realism and decadence), French culture (particularly Parisian) was widely regarded as being less moral than its English counterpart. If English spectators saw foreign productions, they had to realize that such things were not permissible at home. Comparing the theatrical scenes of London and Paris, an English writer was quite explicit about what it all boiled down to:

There are other reasons [besides the family composition of English audiences and different acting styles] which cause dramas that are perfectly possible and not glaringly improper in France to be wholly unadaptable to English audiences. If the sanctity of the marriage tie is not always respected in England, the general terms on which the sexes are associated with each other before and after marriage are entirely different on the two sides of

the Channel....Faithlessness in husbands and wives is not in England, as in France, a thing to be satirized by turning the laugh against the betrayer;...(134)

Sexual mores and social stability were at stake. The weakening of one would lead to the collapse of the other. The same double-standard was applied to French and English art as Beardsley bitterly observed in a later interview of 1895:

The British public, or rather, those who make their laws in the Press or on the platform, will forgive anything to a French artist, nothing to his English comrade. Thus, they go into raptures over a most brutally realistic though admirable work by Lautrec, and hide their faces before more innocent art contributions to the Yellow Book. They alone have discovered the Unmentionable.(135)

Evidently what the critics perceived as his decadent style was deemed more appropriate in the case of a French actress. R`ejane's quintessential Frenchness could not have escaped consumers of the magazine's second volume which also contained an article on the actress by Dauphin Meunier that repeatedly stressed the point:

...beauty without beauty, immorality without evil: a nothing capable of everything: such is Woman at Paris: such is the Parisienne: and Madame R`ejane is the Parisienne, is all Parisiennes, incarnated...[next page] Madame R`ejane - the Parisienne: they are interchangeable terms...[next page] R`ejane is Paris. She carries the soul of Paris with her,...(136)

The Yellow Book's combination of 'English rowdyism and French lubricity' made it a logical place for pictures of French actresses.¹³⁷

Furthermore, as the quotation suggested, unlike Mrs. Campbell, R`ejane was famous for her skills of impersonation, not her appearance which was considered rather unusual. In this instance, therefore, the widely held conviction that Beardsley's style was unflattering to women would not

necessarily have been a liability.

The unsuitability of Beardsley's style for English subjects was the basis of a Punch cartoon of 1895 entitled Britannia à la Beardsley (fig. 107). Here Britannia was shown in the guise of a Beardsley woman with dark curling hair, heavily sensual lips, and half-closed eyes. Wearing a dress that exposed her shoulders and was ornamented by a grotesque, she was the antithesis of the standard, scantily clad, but virginal, national figure. The joke played on the incongruity between the symbols of Britain (e.g. Britannia, the royal lion, the maritime trident) and the inappropriate Beardsley-like foreign touches (e.g. the Frnech furniture and pierrot costumes of Punch and the dog). The implications were that Beardsley's style countered and possibly even undermined British nationalism.

In fact, it may have relieved critics to have seen Beardsley associated with French not English subject matter: his success with Rèjane suggesting that he was a foreign aberration rather than a native English product. This desire to shift the burden of decadence onto France was one way of avoiding the uncomfortable issues it raised. Writing two years later, a hostile critic of Beardsley found this by far the simplest solution:

Why not hoist the Decadents altogether off our shoulders and saddle them on to France? She has a nice broad back for such things, and Mr. Beardsley won't be the last straw by many. Let us hug ourselves on our iron constitution, and clean bill of health we should have, but for the tainted whiffs across the Channel that lodge Gallic germs in our lungs. Our Beardsley's have

identical symptoms with Verlaine, Degas, Le Grand, Forain, and might quite well be sick from infection.(138)

A further factor contributing to the favourable response to the image of Rêjane may have been its logical comparison to Francis Forster's 'A Reminiscence of the Transgressor' (fig. 108) which also appeared in the same issue. While Forster's work did not attract as much attention as Beardsley's, the few comments passed on the piece indicate that it was not well liked.¹³⁹ Forster depicted Olga Nethersole's rendition of Sylvia, in the third act of The Transgressor which was viewed as a more advanced play than The Second Mrs. Tangueray (fig. 109). Written by A.W. Gattie and produced at the Royal Court Theatre, the play ran for 66 performances from January until April 1894.¹⁴⁰ The story involved a man (Eric Langley) with an insane wife who had been institutionalized for years, falling in love with another woman (Sylvia) who he told his wife was dead. When she discovered the truth, she passionately declared her readiness to defy social convention and live with him, but he magnanimously refused her offer publicly exposing his duplicity. The plays ends with both denied emotional fulfilment.

The playwright was quite frank about his purpose of demonstrating the need for a reform of the divorce laws.¹⁴¹ While Olga Nethersole's acting was recognized for its sensitivity, the reception of the play was quite mixed: progressive middle-class critics (i.e. Archer) defending it, and conservatives basically finding it a dull and offensive attack on marriage.¹⁴² The fact that Olga Nethersole was an actress with long-standing public association with advanced roles, probably

contributed to the picture's negative reception.¹⁴³ Certainly the visual reference to this more controversial play and actress must have made Beardsley's R jane seem relatively tame by comparison.

VII La Dame Aux Cam lias

In contrast to the image of R jane, 'La Dame Aux Cam lias' (fig. 110) of the October Yellow Book was received less cordially. Beardsley did not specify whether his illustration was drawn from the play or the novel by Alexandre Dumas the Younger, but the fact that the play had been a regular and much discussed part of London theatre seasons since at least 1890, suggests that the picture would have carried certain stage connotations whatever the artist's source.¹⁴⁴ During the summer of 1894, interest in the play was unprecedented when the two most famous actresses of the day, Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse, both performed in different productions of the piece in London. Numerous articles appeared interviewing the actresses and comparing their distinctive styles.¹⁴⁵ In connection with this latest theatrical vogue, it seems worth noting that Beardsley had published this same drawing six months earlier in an April issue of St. Paul's with the vaguer title of 'Girl at Her Toilet'.¹⁴⁶ By retitling the image and placing it in the October volume of the Yellow Book, he may have been trying to make it more relevant to readers who had been following the Duse-Bernhardt debate during the summer.

La Dame Aux Camèlias was a work that many critic's regarded as the direct forerunner of Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray. The two pieces were frequently compared in terms of their subject of a courtesan's life, tragic ending, and deep psychological and social observation. As the French critic, Augustin Filon noted, Pinero's play was a piece 'which Dumas might sign without a blush'.¹⁴⁷ La Dame Aux Camèlias recounted the events of Marguerite Gautier's life as a Society prostitute in Paris. Falling in love with Armand Duval, an honest young man she was temporarily rehabilitated, only to separate from him after the intervention of his father who felt she was ruining his son's life. Pretending to have callously abandoned her lover, Marguerite returned to one of her former clients and Armand left the country. In the novel during Armand's absence, Marguerite died in poverty of consumption (and heart-break), having kept a journal recording her self-sacrifice for his sake. The play was more dramatic, having Armand return just as Marguerite was dying. In her final agony she explained to him that death was her only release since she could not go on living with her past guilt. Here again is the prevailing image of the prostitute whose deeds earn early death not respectability.

Beardsley's picture apparently represents the well-known scene where the prostitute's fate was spelled out to Armand and the audience. At a party in her home, Marguerite had a severe attack of coughing and fled to an adjoining room to recover. Armand followed her, proclaiming his love and protesting that her reckless life-style was killing her.

Getting up and looking in a candlelit mirror, Marguerite replied:

You are very good! What would you have of me? I cannot sleep. I must amuse myself a little. And then, girls like me, what does it matter one more or less? The doctor's tell me that the blood I spit up comes from my throat; I pretend to believe them; it is all I can do for them. (148)

Although the subject of prostitution still carried risqué connotations in the 1890s as we have seen, Dumas's play was largely accepted as suitable dramatic fare for adult London audiences on account of its Frenchness, moral ending, focus on romantic love, and the author's preface explaining that as a conscience-stricken courtesan, Marguerite was exceptional. However, as in the case of The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, Beardsley's image of La Dame aux Camèlias seems to have highlighted its most objectionable aspects. Even the artist's 'delicious penmanship' could not redeem the piece:

..."La Dame aux Camèlias" is the best [of his contributions to volume three] and has that fine decorative quality, which is, indeed, this artist's only quality. The lenient critic may find therein an excuse - we do not say a justification - for a putrescent imagination,...(149)

Part of the problem seems to have been the generally pessimistic tone of the entire volume. As the Queen critic noted, with two exceptions by Albert Moore and Kenneth Grahame, the magazine was filled with depressing visions of life (e.g. the contributions of Crackanthorpe, Harland, MacDonald, Dowson and Davidson). Sharing the Yellow Book writers' reaction against 'happily-ever-after' fiction, the Queen critic nevertheless felt the magazine went too far in the opposite direction. Beardsley's drawings were singled out as the dreariest, touching the 'lowest depth of morbid horror'.¹⁵⁰ Instead of teaching a moral

lesson, this version of La Dame aux Camélias seems to have been seen as part of the decadent's unhealthy documentation of the destructive pressures society placed on individuals.

Turning to the illustration itself, it seems significant that Beardsley's drawing more closely resembled Bernhardt's rendition of the piece rather than Duse's in terms of the woman's physical appearance, her costume, and the background (fig. 111).¹⁵¹ Certainly he was a great admirer of her acting. Bernhardt's performances were generally considered more forceful and sexually seductive, while Duse was praised for the subtlety and naturalness of her gestures. Essentially critics were divided over what they perceived as Duse's re-interpretation of Dumas's play:

How does Duse handle it? What is the novel reading? She deliberately eliminates all the demi-monde flavour, and with great skill manages to create a feeling of purity, of respectability, even from the first. To talk of scandal of such a creature as Duse paints would seem impossible; to believe that she could return to a vicious life when death is possible appears ridiculous. New reading? - it would be a new reading to give Macbeth a flavour of the Methodist minister, but none the better for being new.

The solution which I suggest is that Duse lacks womanliness, in a low sense of the term, and is no more capable of bringing out the suggestion of sex than was Mary Anderson. Indeed, in the Italian actress [Duse] there is nothing of the feline charm that renders a Bernhardt or Rehan fascinating. (152)

It is interesting to note that Beardsley's image resembled her production.¹⁵³ Evidently it also captured the demi-monde side of Marguerite with her love of life, luxury and sensual experience, but somehow the picture went too far, judging from the St. James Gazette's

accusation of a 'putrescent imagination'.¹⁵⁴

Above all the woman's heavy lips and eyelids, exotic dress and preoccupation with an elaborate toilet would have signified a dangerous sensuality to consumers of the Yellow Book. The toilet-table, one of Beardsley's favourite motifs, must have recalled his earlier scene of Salomé's toilet with its connections to Oscar Wilde and perverse sexuality. Furthermore, it was also the subject of the magazine's cover (fig. 112) where a woman in similarly styled expensive garments peers at her face in a mirror that does not reflect her image. Symbols of artifice abound from the instruments and potions on the table and the floral garlands entwining the mirror to the bow suspended over the woman's head. Reade has suggested that the unusual street lamps illuminating the mirror insinuate that the woman is so narcissistic and 'charged with desire to see the love of herself reflected in the eyes of others that she is vulnerable to any bold encounter in the streets of London's night life'.⁵⁵ While Reade unconvincingly argues that she is too richly dressed to be a prostitute, his suggestion of the indoor/outdoor significance of the street lamp seems more plausible especially when one examines another of Beardsley's toilet-tables designed for an 1894 issue of the Idler (fig. 113).¹⁵⁶ In this image the connection between the interior application of cosmetics for the exterior trade of prostitution is clearly conveyed by the use of the same street lamp. The tightly corseted, artificial woman becomes the fat, lascivious whore. Both are misogynously portrayed as femmes fatales who prey upon deceived men.

This was one of the main propositions advanced in Max Beerbohm's parody of decadence, 'A Defence of Cosmetics', which had appeared earlier in the first volume of the Yellow Book. Beardsley's toilet-table images probably reminded critics of Beerbohm's intricate verbal descriptions of the same subject.¹⁵⁷ Although some of the press recognized Beerbohm's humour, so many took the piece seriously that Beerbohm felt obliged to explain it was a joke in a letter to the editor in the next volume. By praising the return of make-up in deliberately stilted and inflated language, Beerbohm mounted an attack on what he described as the idolized Dickensian girl (i.e. young, innocent, natural, and charming) of the early Victorian period, forecasting her 'final extinction beneath the rising tide of cosmetics'.¹⁵⁸ Here the use of cosmetics was equated with a return to eighteenth century aristocratic immorality, rather than nineteenth century feminism. In fact, he predicted that the return of artifice would harm feminism (whose supporters he castigated as 'horrific pioneers of womanhood') since women would be too busy looking after their appearances to have time for much else. Predictably it was the demise of the natural girl, not the feminist that upset Beerbohm's critics. While most of them contented themselves with condemning the authors almost incomprehensibly embellished style as silly, other such as the Westminster Gazette clearly found the piece threatening, rebuking the editors for publishing such 'pernicious nonsense'.¹⁵⁹

The problem with advocating indiscriminate artifice was not that it directly symbolized the New Woman (who as a member of the middle class

seldom wore much make-up), but like her it challenged prevailing sexual norms by disrupting the existing codes of dress which provided men with fairly reliable indications of a woman's character. As Beerbohm expressed it:

The very jargon of the hunting-field connects cunning with a mask. And so perhaps came man's anger at the embellishment of women - that lovely mask of enamel with its shadows of pink and tiny pencilled veins, what must lurk behind it? Of what treacherous mysteries may it not be the screen? Does not the heathen lacquer her dark face, and the harlot paint her cheeks, because the sorrow has made them pale? (160)

If all females presented the same decadent facade how could men distinguish between women of virtue and women of vice? In the ensuing confusion pure women weakened by their excessive personal vanity could easily be led astray. Underlying these objections was the terrifying prospect of unrestrained female sexual activity with its threat to such patriarchal Victorian mainstays as male inheritance and the sexual division of labour. Equally worrying was Beerbohm's suggestion that artifice could make members of different socio-economic groups visually indistinguishable: 'For it [artifice] will place Beauty within the easy reach of many who could not otherwise hope to attain it.'¹⁶¹

Although wearing also of make-up could be fashionably decadent, for the most part it was considered unfashionably vulgar, as a Punch cartoon entitled 'A Painted Lady' (fig. 114) demonstrates. The child who comments on her upper-middle-class mother's elaborate toilet is sent to the nursery in disgrace. The title puns on the use of cosmetics, having one's portrait painted, and the euphemistic term for a prostitute. The fact

that middle-class ladies should avoid excessive make-up was also underlined by Cynthia Brooke, an actress of the period. Recalling her early roles at the less than exclusive Adelphi Theatre, she criticized herself for spending two pounds on grease paints when two shillings would have been sufficient. Graduating to more respectable theatres and parts, she realized, 'the less make-up the better'.¹⁶² Such unrefined connotations would have seemed inappropriate for illustrating a Society play that was performed by actresses of Bernhardt's and Duse's stature.

Finally it should be noted that the third Yellow Book was released on October 16th at the height of the Empire Theatre scandal when anxieties over the issue of prostitution and its theatrical associations exploded. A cartoon by Eckhardt published in Pick-Me-Up during November 1894 (fig. 115) demonstrates the widely held conviction that these two female professions were intricately linked. Located near the bar of the Empire's circular promenade two 'actresses' are shown conversing. The second woman laments to her companion that being an understudy is 'all work and no play'. The pun on play in its theatrical and amusement senses is decidedly risqué given their surroundings. The obvious implications are that the woman prefers 'moonlighting' at the Empire to theatrical employment - an inference that would have doubtlessly appealed to Pick-Me-Up's predominantly male readers.

Some of those who supported Mrs. Chant's crusade to close the Empire promenade saw it as the beginning of a larger campaign to clean up a number of London theatres both in terms of their clientele and

programmes. A 'Christian' writing in praise of Mrs. Chant to the editor of the Daily Telegraph made it clear that this would encompass much if not all New Theatre:

If we can believe the evidence of your correspondents, the Empire is a place where ballets are performed of which the one object seems to be the display of as much indecency as is possible without coming under any of the Acts of Parliament against public decency. And worse still, it is a place in which women of the worst class congregate and assemble unmolested - women who in all ages and stages of society are termed abandoned.

It has long been noticeable that this present age is an age of impurity. Nine out of ten of the theatres nowadays are, in my opinion, unfit to take ladies to at all. Plays written by authors of undoubted talent, presented by able managers under the guise of having a 'motive' indicate and point out, for amusement or palliation, the grossest features of the society to-day. (163)

One imagines that La Dame aux Camélias and The Second Mrs. Tanqueray would have fit this writer's description.

While Beardsley's image could have scarcely been admired by the purity lobby, it was quite likely that the majority of their opponents also considered it too conspicuous, albeit for different reasons. Many of the Empire's defenders asserted that although women of doubtful reputation frequented the promenade, they performed an essential service without being conspicuous nuisances. One of these writers told the editor a lady he had taken to the promenade was greatly surprised when he informed her 'many of them [the women on the promenade] were not ladies in her sense of the word'.¹⁶⁴ This point was picked up by several cartoonists who attacked the purity lobby, including Phil May whose 'At the Alhambra' (fig. 116) pointed out that the promenades of other music-halls were also

visited by 'fast' women. In this case the women looked so much like the other ladies that they even confused the staff.¹⁶⁵ While cartoonists could joke about the situation, it seems that in the wake of the purity campaign, even the defenders of prostitution as a necessary evil were particularly sensitive about open displays of it in respectable public circles. Evidently this included such literary and artistic forums as the Yellow Book.

VIII Winnifred Emery

Turning to examine Beardsley's last actress, Winnifred Emery (fig. 117) in the fourth volume, one finds the picture was generally well received despite the fact that the response to it also seems to have been integrally connected to contemporary debates on the roles of women. While there was much disagreement over whether the image was a good likeness, almost all of the critics nevertheless felt it was 'delicate' and 'charming' - both adjectives that carried traditional feminine connotations.¹⁶⁶ A number of writers compared it favourably to his other contributions:

Diseased and unashamed are the only epithets which do justice to some of Mr. Beardsley's productions, though the design on the cover and a portrait of Miss Winnifred Emery which is in its way graceful and passably like, suggest that he could do very different of he chose. (167)

Although several critics recognized that the piece was stylistically 'a companion picture to the famous Mrs. Tanqueray', they considered it

'different, inasmuch as it is easily recognisable if once the knowledge of the subject be but firmly fixed in the mind.'¹⁶⁸

Indeed, an awareness of the subject seems to provide the key to this rare instance of the establishment's approval of Beardsley's work. Significantly the release of the January issue of the magazine coincided with Emery's fame in a role that was the complete antithesis of feminist aspirations. This was her performance of Margery, the heroine of Sydney Grundy's play, The New Woman, an ostensibly comical (and blatantly misogynous) attack on emancipated women that ran at the Comedy Theatre from September 1, 1894 until February 5, 1895.

Basically Grundy's plot revolved around the experiences of Gerald Cazenove (Fred Terry), a young Oxford graduate, who initially was an enthusiastic champion of the New Woman's cause. Collaborating with Agnes Sylvester (Alma Murray who played Grundy's version of an ardent feminist) on a book about the New Morality, Cazenove takes a country holiday during which he falls in love with Margery (Winnifred Emery), a simple, old-fashioned, farmer's daughter. Marrying Margery and continuing his book, Cazenove becomes disillusioned with his new wife's social inferiority and childish behaviour. Meanwhile, Agnes, the ambitious opportunist, declares her love for Cazenove, urging that they should have the courage to live out their advanced convictions. Margery, overhearing this scene sadly returns to her father's farm, only to be shortly followed by Cazenove who wisely realizes his support for the feminist cause was a terrible mistake. All ends happily (?) with Margery declaring that

although she could never pretend to be a lady, she would always be a simple woman, and Cazenove contentedly replying, 'I want you to be nothing less or more - only a woman'.¹⁶⁹

Throughout the piece endless jokes were made at the expense of Agnes and her emancipated friends (i.e. on their middle-aged spinster status, their intellectual pretensions, and social gaucheries like lighting cigarettes at the wrong end). Clearly their cruel and brash behaviour was designed to repel the audience. For the most part effective, in a few cases, Grundy's excesses actually overshot their mark alienating several reviewers of specialized theatrical journals. Archer's complaints that Grundy was absurdly unjust to the New Woman were echoed in the columns of the Theatre and Stage, the latter observing:

Of the subtle movement that would appear to be going amongst women he [Grundy] perceives nothing, or at all events presents nothing. Women are striving after greater and - why should we not believe? - purer freedom in a world made not only for one sex. Mr. Grundy, in the limitation of his hearty convictions, we suppose, cannot appreciate this state of things. (170)

Yet what upset this small minority of reviewers clearly appealed to large sectors of the general public who eagerly flocked to performances. The opening was particularly impressive with the Duke and Duchess of York and many theatrical celebrities in attendance.¹⁷¹ On the whole, the popular press particularly enjoyed the piece, devoting lengthy reviews to Winnifred Emery's portrayal of Grundy's moral message:

Miss Winnifred Emery, who has the part of an adorable woman of the sort that is content to be as God has made her - nothing 'new' in that - will be the central figure

of the new world, and will pass scatheless through temptation to which the other sex - I mean the other female sex, that is neither man nor woman - seems to think it weakness, not to yield to, but to resist. Such is the new morality. (172)

Whether the artist's uncharacteristic selection of such a traditional subject was a deliberate ploy to secure press approval remains uncertain since no references to either the picture or Winnifred Emery appear among his recorded letters and statements. Significantly Beardsley chose to represent Winnifred Emery in the role of Margery, the traditional woman, instead of Alma Murray who played Agnes Sylvester, the New Woman. Other designs for the piece such as A. Morrow's poster (fig. 118) focused on the New Woman of the title.¹⁷³ Certainly judging from reviews, the play was considered more of a triumph for Emery than Murray, although Grundy had clearly made her role more appealing. While Beardsley was obviously illustrating a success of the moment, he scarcely could have overlooked its affirmation of traditional femininity. In this respect, Beardsley seems to have presented Emery in a slightly less imposing position than the one he used in the case of Mrs. Patrick Campbell. While Campbell is in the process of advancing as her trailing skirt and forward stance indicate, Emery has just retired to her position. Emery's more restricted movement and greater distance from the viewer may have formally reinforced the reassuring connotations of her as a 'natural' woman.

It is also difficult to determine whether the portrait was drawn from a sitting, the theatre, and/or a contemporary photograph of the actress. The latter is suggested by her hair-style and clothing which were not features of her New Woman costumes, but recalled those of a

portrait photograph which appeared in the December 1894 issue of Theatre, with an article praising Emery's acting in Grundy's play (fig. 119). It is worth noting that Beardsley's image resembled an artistic photograph from a high quality magazine, rather than quick sketches or caricatures. Such similarities would have provided a familiar context for Beardsley's image without lowering its tone. In any case, whether such comparisons were drawn, clearly the prevailing factor in the success of this picture was its timely reference to Emery's popularity as a symbol of eternal womanhood which overshadowed the usual problems associated with actresses' dodgy social status and Beardsley's advanced style.

IX Walter Sickert's Music-Hall Illustrations

Although all four of Beardsley's actresses were discussed in terms of the ongoing debate over the social position of women, only his images of Mrs. Campbell and 'La Dame aux Camelias' seem to have been seen as menacingly advanced. In order to understand the scope of the threat these images posed, it is helpful to conclude this chapter with a brief examination of Walter Sickert's music-hall contributions. Appearing in the first three Yellow Books, Sickert's six working-class performers were repeatedly compared to their West End counterparts. Like Beardsley, Sickert was attacked for violating artistic traditions. As noted earlier, the Times had juxtaposed the 'graceful studies' of Leighton in the first volume to the 'advanced and riotous' work of Sickert and Beardsley, while

the Speaker had mockingly accused the two men of disguising themselves as artists. The Spectator went even further in a review of the third issue, equating their unorthodox work with a subversive politics:

Mr. Aubrey Beardsley displays four of his caricatures; Mr. Walter Sickert and Mr. P. Wilson Steer are best-known of the other contributors. There is curious air of unreality, an artificial, theatrical, music-hall atmosphere about their productions, the work apparently of the left-wing of the English impressionist school. (174)

On one level the link between the artists was justified. All three exhibited at New English Art Club exhibitions, and during the 1890s, Sickert, in particular, was friendly with a number of the Yellow Book's younger contributors, including its two editors. He was one of those initiates specially invited to a dinner celebrating the release of the magazine organized by John Lane.¹⁷⁵ Evidently he felt the periodical was worthwhile since in addition to contributing many illustrations, he sent some of his friend's manuscripts to Harland.¹⁷⁶ Another more public demonstration of his friendship was Sickert's portrait of Beardsley featured along with some of his music-hall scenes in the magazine's second issue (fig. 120). The fact that the two men were interested in similar subjects is revealed by Beardsley's sketch of the music-hall performer, Ada Lundberg, of 1893 (fig. 121) whose side profile echoes Sickert's earlier picture of her executed about 1887 and subsequently published in the Yellow Book (fig. 122).¹⁷⁷ While Beardsley obviously supported Sickert's music-hall ventures, his own published pictures looked quite different both in terms of their subject matter and style. This is important because the majority of critics must have based their observations on the magazine (having neither access nor

time to research additional information), meaning that the connections they made between the two artists rested on factors other than pictorial resemblance, personal friendship, and shared interests. Paradoxically, it was precisely the differences between Beardsley and Sickert that led critics to conclude the work of these artists represented two sides of a decadent coin.

Above all, Sickert's music-hall contributions were images of working-class entertainment. In contrast to Beardsley's preference for the classier West End halls (e.g. the Alhambra and Empire), for the most part, Sickert frequented older, more run-down, suburban halls (e.g. the Marylebone, and Collin's in Islington).¹⁷⁸ The fact that both the performers and audiences at such venues were almost exclusively working-class was emphasized in a vocabulary which spoke of performers 'working a hall' as distinct from West End actors and actresses 'playing a role'.¹⁷⁹ Similarly the audiences paid lower admission prices and wore everyday clothes instead of evening attire. The sale of alcohol was permitted and even promoted during the evening's mixed programme of song, dance, comedy, and skill-testing acts.

All of these details were carefully recorded in Sickert's illustrations which presented combinations of famous performers executing their turns, the audience's reaction, and the architecture and furnishings of various halls. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, Sickert was one of very few English artists interested in music-hall interiors.¹⁸⁰

In fact he had established a reputation for specializing in the subject

which featured prominently amongst his contributions to the London Impressionist and New English Art Club exhibitions. Although the majority of his Yellow Book illustrations were based on earlier exhibited oil paintings, repeated exposure to the public had at best won him limited acceptance from a few liberal-minded critics.¹⁸¹ Despite their familiarity with his work, on the whole, establishment art critics continued to greet his compositions with hostility.

A large part of the problem undoubtedly centred on the subject matter. Reviewing some of Sickert's pictures in March 1895, D. S. MacColl noted:

He [Sickert] has probably, indeed, a private sentiment for the stage and footlights, such as other men feel for the fields and sunlight; but this does not further him much with a public thatresents the stage in pictures almost as much as a play in church. It is somewhat touching, this British feeling that the canvas is consecrated ground, but it is not very rational. (182)

It was primarily the hall's class of patrons rather than its entertainment that conferred this disreputable status. Music-hall acts covered the whole socio-political spectrum ranging from extremely conservative outbursts of jingoism to subversive attacks on the establishment. By the end of the century, however, the former became more prevalent, especially in West End halls where both the proprietors and patrons of the halls became increasingly tied to the Conservative party. This music-hall Toryism, as Stedman Jones describes it, was closely related to the Conservative party's defence of the drink trade in contrast to the association of Evangelical teetotallers and the Liberals.¹⁸³ Yet in spite of the conservative tendencies of much music-hall entertainment,

the establishment's fundamental anxieties about massive gatherings of workers was never entirely dispelled. Adding to its risqué image, the music-hall was upheld as a symbol of bohemian protest against conventional middle-class morality by various younger writers of the period including Richard LeGallienne, Arthur Symons, Max Beerbohm and George Moore. Moore's well-known comments on the topic in his Confessions of a Young Man (1888) were typical:

The music hall is a protest against Mrs. Kendal's marital tenderness and the platitudes of Messrs. Pettit and Sims; the music hall is a protest against Sardou and the immense drawing-room sets, rich hangings, velvet sofas, etc., so different from the movement of English comedy with its constant change of scene. The music hall is a protest against the villa, the circulating library, the club, and for this the 'all' is inexpressibly dear to me. (184)

However, it should be stressed that during the early 1890s music-hall acts could be presented with enough taste for middle-class and Society consumption. One image of the Cockney (suitably cleaned up and deferential) was marketed with great success by Albert Chevalier who frequently sang coster songs in West End drawing-rooms. While Chevalier's expurgated performance was widely praised, there were a few denunciations of its over-refinement.¹⁸⁵ Evidently such objectors who wanted the 'real thing' were a potential market for Sickert's equally constructed but less prettified images. The artist's preference for the hall's least respectable elements was demonstrated by his pictures of performers like the 'Lion Comique' (Yellow Book III - fig. 123), comedians widely disparaged in the respectable press for their debased morals and drunken humour, and also his portrayal of the leering male audience in 'Ada Lundberg' (fig. 54).¹⁸⁶ Adding insult to injury was the stylistic

unorthodoxy of his dark tonalities, fragmented compositions and impressionistic brushwork.

The charge of 'impressionism' frequently levelled at Sickert's Yellow Book pictures branded him a 'decadent'. Arthur Symonds had earlier explained this connection in a much publicized literary article:

Taking the word Decadence, then, as most precisely expressing the general sense of the newest movement in literature, we find that the terms Impressionism and Symbolism define correctly enough the two main branches of that movement. Now Impressionist and Symbolist have more in common than either supposes; ...What both seek is not general truth merely, but la vertie vraie, the very essence of truth - the truth of appearances to the senses,...and the truth of spiritual things to the spiritual vision. (187)

Here it should be stressed that terms such as symbolism, decadence, realism and impressionism are socially constructed categories whose meanings are subject to considerable variation, depending on the position of the viewer and object/person under scrutiny. A twentieth century art-historical reluctance to discard the old essentialist view of these categories has led to some amazing conceptual acrobatics in the case of Beardsley where nineteenth century critics simultaneously used all four labels to describe his work. A typical example is provided by Simon Wilson, a recent Beardsley scholar, who tries to argue that Decadence is an extreme form of Romanticism (in its reaction against the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie); but also a form of Realism (in that the artists portrayed facts the bourgeoisie preferred to ignore); and yet again different from Realism (in that Decadent works were exquisitely refined rather than rough and raw).¹⁸⁸ In the end the categories are

stretched beyond all recognition hindering rather than assisting historical analysis. With respect to Beardsley, if the labels are viewed critically as relative rather than absolute terms, it becomes apparent that the English establishment's cultural reviewers were less interested in the French avant-garde nuances of these terms (which all too often are accepted as art historical standards of 'truth') than the simple fact they signalled a dangerous foreign influence.

In Sickert's case, his impressionistic documentation of the sordid details of working-class life was a disturbing reminder of the masses that lived beyond the pale of middle-class mores. The fact that the majority of the Yellow Book's middle-class associated illustrations of East End performers with emancipated West End actresses is hardly surprising since it was this type of alliance of the dispossessed that worried so many contemporary cultural observers. Typically one such writer found it necessary to warn his readers that revolutionary morality and politics were inseparable:

The connection between revolutionary principles in ethics and politics is obvious. The aesthetic sensualist and the communist are, in a sense, nearly related. Both have a common hatred for whatever is established or held sacred by the majority...In these days the unbridled licentiousness of your literary decadent has its counterpart in the violence of the political anarchist. Each is the alter-ego-maniac of the other. The one works with the quill, the other with the bomb; and the quill is the more dangerous weapon of the two. (189)

Hence the equation that linked Sickert's images of the working class with decadence, and Beardsley's images of the decadent New Woman with the working class. The latter concept was probably most forcefully

articulated a year later by Margaret Armour whose article on Beardsley appeared in the climate of hostility following the trial of Oscar Wilde:

Mr. Beardsley has a trick of superimposing one style on another - Japanese on medieval, medieval on Celtic. That does not matter so long as he has the genius to unify; but what does matter is that the groundwork of them all should be Cockney, and the coster so prominent in the motifs...In fact the Yellow Book was just a glorified Pick-Me-Up, and both are utterances of the Cockney soul.

There is nothing easier to prove than a kinship between the two. The Yellow Book may be considered as a younger brother who, through superior educational advantages, has forced himself into good society where the family taint, known as vulgarity at a penny, becomes decadence at five shillings. (190)

Both the New Woman and Cockney were malcontents whose very existence undermined middle-class male hegemony.

Section Three Footnotes

1

The only two reviews with I have located mentioning these works are the Daily Chronicle (October 16, 1894), p.3. which simply called them both 'stupid'; and the Globe (October 18, 1894), p.6 which used the words 'pictorial nightmares' again referring to the two pictures.

2

Simon Wilson, Beardsley (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1983), p. 22.

3

Malcolm Easton, Aubrey and the Dying Lady (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), pp. 184-186 and 198. Easton provides the details of Mabel's early career and points out how her brother seldom missed the opportunity to promote her during his own interviews. One example appeared in the Idler (March 1896), p. 200 to which Beardsley added a photograph of his sister along with his own drawings.

4

For a discussion of the increasing respectability of Victorian theatres, inaugurated by such pioneers as the Bancrofts at the Prince of Wales Theatre, consult George Rowell, The Victorian Theatre 1792-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978 reprint of 1956), ch. 3 'The Return of Respectability'. All of these innovations were designed to focus audience attention on the stage instead on activities in the auditorium (i.e. people-watching, soliciting etc.)

5

The separation of different social strata in theatre seating is discussed by Victor Glasstone, Victorian and Edwardian Theatres (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 79. It should be noted that proper evening attire was mandatory for holders of box, stall and dress-circle tickets.

6

During the latter part of the century, however, the spectre of the theatre mobilizing angry mobs was largely imaginary probably stemming from earlier days of large multi-class audiences. Ironically music-halls which attracted larger and rowdier crowds were not subject to the same form of censorship (which would have proven virtually impossible in the case of numerous, often improvised 'turns'), although their licences could be revoked, as seen in the case of the Empire Theatre discussed in section one.

7

John Russell Stephens, The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), ch. 8 'Moral Decorum and the Advancement of Drama', pp. 138-139.

8

The first published editions of each were: Oscar Wilde, Salomé.

Translated by Lord Alfred Douglas. (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1894), William Heineman, The First Step: A Dramatic Moment (London: John Lane, 1895), and George Bernard Shaw, Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant Vol. 1 (London: Grant Richards, 1898). Shaw's preface explains in considerable detail how the Independent Theatre Society could not produce Mrs. Warren's Profession without a licence, and more generally how the practice of censorship was damaging to the growth of New Theatre. It should be noted that Mathews and Lane published many such rejected plays.

9

See the discussion surrounding the prosecution of Pick-Me-Up in section two.

10

Leading exponents included the critic William Archer, the playwrights Henry Jones, George Bernard Shaw, and the organizer of the Independent Theatre J.T. Grein. Among its critics Clement Scott, a prominent theatrical reviewer was probably the most outspoken. For a useful discussion of the variations within the category of New Theatre, consult, W.A. Lewis Bettany, 'Five Years of Progress', Theatre (May 1894): 239-47.

11

Organized readings, especially of Ibsen's works were very popular in amateur theatrical circles. Several commentators from the period recalled the success of Edward Aveling's readings of Ghosts at the Playgoers Club, see A.A. Gein, J.T. Grein: The Story of a Pioneer 1862-1935 (London: John Murray, 1936), p. 79. Yvonne Kapp, Eleanor Marx 2 vols. (London: Virago, 1979 reprint of 1976 and 1972), vol. 2, pp. 110-105 also provides an interesting insight into the atmosphere in amateur dramatic circles in which among others Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, George Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis, and Olive Schreiner enthusiastically participated. Publishing a play certainly enabled it to reach a wider audience since as G.B. Shaw observed, the habit of playgoing on a regular basis even for the middle class was limited by expensive ticket prices, distance from theatres, the discomforts of evening dress and the attractions of staying at home - see Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, vol. 1, pp. xvi-xvii.

12

It should be noted that the number of people involved in such societies was extremely small. The highpoint of the Independent Theatre Society's membership was reached in 1892 when 175 people subscribed to a series of four plays. Consult Frank Burton, 'London Theatre Audiences of the Nineteenth Century' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1953), p. 409.

13

New Women heroines were not passive victims. On the contrary they frequently fought strenuously against debilitating social conventions. It was rather their isolation and the sheer size of the

undertaking that overwhelmed them. Although stereotypes of the female victim have frequently been used by anti-feminists to invoke male protectionism, revealing the oppressive nature of specific patriarchal social structures remains an important strategy for securing feminist objectives. Of course a distinction must be drawn between New Women in real life who usually survived genuine hardship quite capably and doomed theatrical representations.

14

Sketch (February 7, 1894), p. 71.

15

Brian Reade, Aubrey Beardsley (New York: Bonanza Books, 1967), p. 335.

16

Initially launched as the London Playgoer, the magazine underwent several changes of title to Playgoer and Comedy and eventually Playgoer's Review.

17

Typical expressions of their opposition to frothy West End entertainment are provided by Henry Arthur Jones's inaugural address of 1884 entitled 'The Dramatic Outlook', and his speech of 1892 'Our Modern Drama Is It an Art or an Amusement?'. Both of these lectures were reprinted in his book The Renaissance of the English Drama (London: Macmillan, 1895).

18

The Letters of Oscar Wilde Edited by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 317.

19

Extracts from this letter from Edward Pigott to Spenser Ponsonby dated June 27, 1892 are cited in Stephens, Censorship, p. 112.

20

Archer's letter appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette (July 1, 1892). The full text is reprinted in The Letters of Wilde, p. 317. As the editor, Hart-Davis points out, Archer had been the only witness who denounced stage censorship when he testified at the Select Committee Inquiry on the issue in 1892. He was probably the most vigorous and prolific writer supporting the New Theatre in the 1890s.

21

Times (February 23, 1893), p. 8. For a similar condemnation consult the Daily Telegraph (February 25, 1893).

22

William Archer, 'Mr. Wilde's New Play', Black and White (May 11, 1893), p. 290. Another favourable review focusing on formal concerns

was written by Lord Alfred Douglas and published in the Spirit Lamp, an Oxford undergraduate magazine. Reprints of these reviews appear in Karl Beckson ed., Oscar Wilde: the Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 132-141.

23

I am not suggesting that these were the only themes in what has proven a variously interpreted play. However, their obvious importance makes their lack of discussion rather striking.

24

James Nelson, The Early Nineties: A View From the Bodley Head (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 97.

25

Ibid., pp. 238-9.

26

Consult Elliott L. Gilbert, 'Tumult of Images: Wilde, Beardsley and Salomé', Victorian Studies (Winter 1983), pp. 134-59 for a recent analysis and bibliography of the Salomé illustrations.

27

Nelson, Nineties, p. 242.

28

Reade, Beardsley, p. 337.

29

Clearly Beardsley's choice of books was intended to represent the pinnacle of decadence. Zola was widely discussed in the contemporary English press as the leading exponent of the branch of decadence that specialized in sordid realism (e.g. see Thomas Bradfield, 'A Dominant Note of Some Recent Fiction', Westminster Review 142 (1894), p. 543). As previously mentioned the trial of his English publisher, Vitzelly, in 1885 had greatly publicized him as a morally corrupt writer. The choice of Apuleius and Verlaine was significant as these authors were much admired by Des Esseintes, the Arch-Decadent hero of Huysman's A Rebours, a fact that had been carefully pointed out to the English public in Arthur Symon's controversial article, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', Harper's New Monthly Magazine (November 1893), p. 866. Furthermore Havelock Ellis's inclusion of Verlaine amongst his prison artists in The Criminal has already been mentioned.

30

Reade, Beardsley, p. 337.

31

Stanley Weintraub, Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p. 59.

32

This has been detected by other researchers, see Gilbert, Victorian Studies, pp. 158-159 who analyzes 'The Climax' as a depiction of insatiable female lust and male castration fears.

33

Discussing the dress codes of prostitutes in London, Judith Walkowitz cites the comment of a Victorian observer, James Greenwood, who examined the parcels of clothing belonging to prostitutes interned in the Westminster House of Correction in 1873. According to Walkowitz, he noted that:

nothing is more common than for these poor creatures to be found wearing a gaudy hat and feather and a fashionably made skirt and jacket of some cheap and flashy material and nothing besides in the way of undergarments but a few tattered rags that a professional beggar would despise.

See Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982 reprint of 1980), p. 26.

34

Reade, Beardsley, p. 388 notes that the first publication of the work was as Plate VIII in the Salomé portfolio.

35

Weinraub, Beardsley, p. 72.

36

Wilde, Salomé, pp. 21-3.

37

Reade, Beardsley, p. 338.

38

Gilbert, Victorian Studies, pp. 152-3. He traces this sexual confusion about Salomé throughout the play's illustrations.

39

Wilde, Salomé, pp. 24-25.

40

Weinraub, Beardsley, p. 75.

41

Nelson, Nineties, pp. 242 and 322. He estimates that Lane's profit margin including both editions of Salomé would have been in the region of £432, see pp. 108-109 for a precise breakdown of the costs. This would have been an exceptionally good return for an edition of only 875. The Studio reference is from Vol. 2 (1894), p. 185.

42

'The Peacock Skirt' seems to have been the most widely reproduced of all the Salomé drawings during the middle of the 1890s.

43

The press and the general public continued to connect the two men long after their uneasy friendship had cooled and they had ceased to work together. Upon the release of the Yellow Book, the Critic reviewer hailed it as the 'Oscar Wilde of periodicals', despite the fact that Wilde never contributed to it. [Critic 640 (1894), p. 360]. Initially this inextricable link worked to Beardsley's advantage securing him additional publicity, but ultimately it was to prove a disastrous liability.

44

'The New Master of Art: Mr. Aubrey Beardsley', To-Day (May 12, 1894), p. 29.

45

The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley. Edited by Henry Maas, J.L. Duncan and W.G. Good (London: Cassell, 1970), p. 63.

46

For a useful account of Farr's strictly unconventional life see Josephine Johnson, Florence Farr: Bernard Shaw's 'New Woman' (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1975).

47

Some of the earliest performances included: Janet Achurch in A Doll's House (1889, 1892, 1893), and Elizabeth Robins in Hedda Gabler (1891, 1893), The Master Builder (1893) and Rosmersholm (1893). Eleonora Duse also appeared in A Doll's House in 1893. Consult, J.P. Wearing, The London Stage 1890-1899 2 vols. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976) for lists of other early performances of Ibsen, and especially for useful nineteenth century accounts of the early response to productions of Ibsen, including critical excerpts, see William Archer, 'The Mausoleum of Ibsen', Fortnightly Review (July 1893): 77-91, and Bettany, Theatre pp. 239-247.

48

Julie Holledge, Innocent Flowers: Woman in the Edwardian Theatre (London: Virago, 1981), p. 27.

49

Clement Scott, 'The Playhouses', Illustrated London News (February 28, 1891), p. 290.

50

Ibid.

51

Much of the information in this paragraph and other material on

the social status of actors and actresses has been drawn from Michael Baker, The Rise of the Victorian Actor (London: Croom Helm, 1978), ch 1 'The Stage and Professions'.

52

The perils of travel and unchaperoned contact with men was widely discussed by such contemporaries as F.C. Burnand, 'Behind the Scenes', Fortnightly Review (January 1885), pp. 87-92.

53

It should be pointed out that their salaries were only high in relation to those of other working women, and not compared to actors who generally received twice as much as actresses, except in the cases of 'stars' where sexual discrimination was not as blatant, see Hollege, Innocent Flowers, p. 22.

54

Baker, Victorian Actor, p. 98.

55

Ibid., pp. 101-103. No doubt it was a hard claim to refute and would have provided prostitutes with an excuse for being in urban centres late at night.

56

This was particularly true of those women who married other stage professionals.

57

George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1888), p. 221. Moore cites this as an example of the profession's increasing respectability which he viewed with a jaundiced eye as leading to artistic stagnation.

58

A first-hand account of this painful experience is provided in H.C. Shuttleworth ed., The Diary of an Actress or Realities of Stage Life (London: Griffith, Farrow, Okeden & Welsh, 1885). A recurring theme throughout the diary is the isolation of a single woman pursuing a stage career.

59

'Our Captious Critic - 'Rosmersholm'', Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News (March 7, 1891), p. 893.

60

The socialist orator was almost certainly Edward Aveling who frequently did readings at the Playgoer's Club. This account is cited in Archer, Fortnightly, p. 84.

61

With the exception of the Arms and the Man which ran for 75 performances, the others were private affairs of a couple of showings, see Wearing, The London Stage.

62

'The Comedy of Sighs', Theatre (May 1, 1894), p. 281.

63

For an account of her life, including her involvement with the Avenue Theatre, consult Rex Pogson, Miss Horniman and the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester (London: Rockliff, 1952).

64

William Archer, Theatrical World 1894 Preface by G. B. Shaw (London: Walter Scott, 1894), p. xxix.

65

Ibid. A typical example of a leading lady whose interests were sometimes compromised for the actor-manager was Ellen Terry who worked under Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre.

66

Shaw explicitly stated that he wrote his play for Florence Farr to produce, consult 'Arms and the Man': A Talk with Mr. Bernard Shaw About His New Play', Pall Mall Budget (April 19, 1894), p. 13.

67

Hollege, Innocent Flowers, pp. 41-42.

68

Note that Farr's dress in Fig. 88 is the same as that in Fig. 85 indicating that the photograph was taken from the controversial production of Ramsersholm.

69

'A Comedy of Sighs at the Avenue Theatre', Sketch (March 28, 1894), p. 445.

70

'A Comedy of Sighs', Era (May 31, 1894), p. 9.

71

'Drama', Athenaeum (April 7, 1894), p. 453.

72

Scott, Illustrated London News, p. 290.

73

'A Comedy of Sighs', Stage (April 5, 1894), p. 13.

74
92. 'A Comedy of Sighs', Theatrical World 1894 (April 4, 1894), p.

75
In financial terms, all of the plays mounted during Farr's season at the Avenue were a failure. Shaw recorded that the average nightly taking for his Arms and the Man which followed Todhunter's A Comedy of Sighs was £22-3-5, an amount that would have been only a fraction of the cost of mounting such a play. Nevertheless, Annie Horniman claimed the venture was artistically worthwhile. Consult, Pogson, Horniman, p. 8.

76
Weintraub, Beardsley, p. 91 suggests this may have been the first time a theatrical poster received its own press reviews.

77
The Globe critic's comments are cited in Weintraub, Beardsley, p. 92. The second quotation appears in Pelican (April 21, 1894), p. 3.

78
To my knowledge there is no record of Beardsly explaining his intentions. The low-cut, rounded neckline of the dark evening dress and the dark background are features that re-emerge in 'Les Passades', To-Day (November 1894) and 'A Night Piece', Yellow Book (April 1894) - fig. 24.

79
A typical example of Paula's unorthodox behaviour appears in the first act when she visits her fiance alone at night in his rooms.

80
La Cigale, a French musical, ran for 417 performances at the Lyric Theatre from October 9, 1890 until December 12, 1891.

81
M.H. Spielmann, 'Posters and Poster-Designing in England', Scribner's Magazine (July 1895), p. 45.

82
William Alexander Coote, A Romance of Philanthropy (London: National Vigilance Association), pp. 47-48.

83
Edward J. Bristow, Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700 (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), pp. 205-206.

84
A programme with Beardsley's design (ref. ms. 160/5/1) can be found in the Beardsley Collection in the Department of Archives and

Manuscripts of the University of Reading Library.

85 'Arms and the Man' at the Avenue Theatre', Pall Mall Budget (April 26, 1894), p. 15.

86 I have not located any particularly positive reviews of this picture.

87 Wearing, London Stage.

88 Arthur Wing Pinero, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (London: Heinemann, 1894).

89 Walter Lazenby, Arthur Wing Pinero (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 129.

90 Barry Duncan, The St. James Theatre (London: Barie & Rockliff, 1964), p. 230.

91 Cyril Maude, Behind the Scenes with Cyril Maude (London: John Murray, 1927), p. 86.

92 Duncan, St. James, p. 230. Mrs. Campbell recorded that Elizabeth Robins actually gave up the part for her as a personal favour since she realized that Campbell was so well suited for it. Apparently this was after Campbell had been approached for the part but was having difficulty breaking her Adelphi contract. See Beatrice Stella Cornwallis West [Mrs. Patrick Campbell], My Life and Some Letters (London: Hutchinson, n.d. [1922]), pp. 63-65.

93 The Stage critic suggested the imagery of Paula drifting like a doomed ship to destruction. See 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray', Stage (June 1, 1893), p. 12. For a useful discussion of the well established mythology of the Victorian prostitute, consult, Lynda Nead, 'Seduction, Prostitution, Suicide: On the Brink by Alfred Elmore', Art History (September 1982): 309-322.

94 'St. James Theatre', Times (May 29, 1893), p. 8.

95 'Drama', Athenaeum (June 3, 1893), p. 709.

96

William Archer, Theatrical World 1893 (London: Walter Scott, 1893), p. 135. Shaw's comments appear in the Saturday Review (February 23, 1895), pp. 250-51.

97

Typical examples of this type of coverage were the following interviews with full page photographs: 'A Chat with Mrs. Campbell', Sketch (June 7, 1893), pp. 284-85, and 'A Chat with Mr. George Alexander', Sketch (December 13, 1893), pp. 343-44.

98

Cornwallis West, My Life, p. 74. Campbell was a keen collector of rare books and reproductions of PreRaphaelite works as an interview in the Westminster Budget (June 7, 1895), p. 10 recorded.

99

Maas et al., eds., Letters of Beardsley, p. 63.

100

Ibid., 66.

101

Westminster Gazette (April 18, 1894), p. 3. The Athenaeum's comments appeared on April 21, 1894, p. 509. The accusations of impertinence and grotesqueness appeared in the Whitehall Review (April 28, 1894), p. 13, and the Globe (April 16, 1894), p. 6.

102

Daily Chronicle (April 17, 1894), p. 3.

103

St. James Gazette (April 18, 1894), p. 15, and Spectator (May 19, 1894), p. 696.

104

Times (April 20, 1894), p. 3.

105

Daily Chronicle (April 16, 1894), p. 3 and Westminster Gazette (April 18, 1894), p. 5.

106

Fraser Harrison, The Dark Angel: Aspects of Victorian Sexuality (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), p. 83. See ch. 5 'Perseus and Andromeda' for a general discussion of Leighton's work during the 1880s-1890s.

107

Phillip G. Hamerton, 'The Yellow Book: A Criticism of Volume I', Yellow Book (July 1894), p. 187.

108

World (April 25, 1894), p. 21.

109

For a discussion of Punch's persistent hostility towards the extension of women's rights from the 1840s until beyond the 1890s, consult David Kunzle, Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body Sculpture in the West (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), ch 3 'Campaign of the Humourists 1846-1900'.

110

A.H.T. 'To Mr. Aubrey Beardsley', Granta (April 28, 1894), p. 278.

111

Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and New Woman in the 1890s', Nineteenth Century Fiction (March 1979), p. 443.

112

E. Lynn Linton, 'The Wild Women as Politicians', Nineteenth Century (March 1891), p. 79.

113

A. R. Cunningham, 'The New Woman of the 1890s', Victorian Studies (December 1973), p. 178.

114

Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (London: Macmillan, 1965 reprint of 1895), cited from the 1912 post script to the preface, pp. ix-x.

115

This applies to various heroines in George Egerton's Keynotes (1893) and her Discords (1894), Jessamine Halliday in Emma Frances Brooke's A Superfluous Woman (1894), Hadria Fullerton in Mona Caird's The Daughters of Danaus (1894), and Gallia Hamesthwaite in Menie Murial Dowie's Gallia (1895).

116

Immediately it should be pointed out that this was a horrifying, physically painful practice that only a socio-sexually oppressed group would consider using. Here the practice of tight-lacing is not seen as a positive strategy for combatting patriarchy, but rather as a minority's desperate attempt to improve their status. In this respect, I feel Kunzle mistakenly places too much emphasis on tight-lacers, themselves seeing it as an act of resistance, when most of them were probably only going to extreme lengths to keep their job or attract business. Nevertheless, what is important for our purposes is the hysterical, antifeminist outburst against the practice which popularly equated thin women and tight-lacers

with social and political activists for women's rights. Like the ugly spinster, the skinny tight-lacer was a stereotype used to discredit feminists.

117

Kunzle, Fashion, p. 21.

118

Ibid., p. 45.

119

'Concerning Clothes', Westminster Budget (February 1, 1895), p. 8.

120

According to a surviving programme for the play in the Enthoven Collection of the Theatre Museum, the ticket prices were:

Boxes	£1-11-6 - £4-4-0
Stalls	10s 6d
Dress Circle	7s
Upper Boxes	4s
Pit	2s 6d
Gallery	1s

These high prices when added to the costs of transportation to and from the theatre (by carriage if one wanted to conform to respectable convention), and evening dress (unless one sat in the gallery) were typical of West End theatres. It was a most expensive form of cultural recreation, when compared to such other activities as reading and visiting art exhibitions. Clearly those who attended the theatre (except perhaps for a few in the gallery) could have easily afforded the Yellow Book. In fact, probably there would have been more people seeing Mrs. Campbell's portrait in the Yellow Book than actually attending the performance. However, such viewers would have already formed a mental picture of the production through its extensive press coverage.

121

Granta (April 28, 1894), p. 278. This was the location of 'A Night Piece' (fig. 24) from the first volume of the Yellow Book which was discussed in the first section.

122

T.H.S. Escott, England: Its People, Polity and Pursuits (London: Chapman & Hall, 1885), p. 546.

123

Janet Hogarth, 'Literary Degenerates', Fortnightly Review 57 (1895), p. 589.

124

Both New Women writers and Beardsley were attacked for their lack of a proper classical education (i.e. male, upper-middle-class) which

resulted in their distorted view of the world.

125

Cornwallis West, My Life, p. 84.

126

Times (May 5, 1894), p. 16 and Man of the World (May 9, 1894), p. 1.

127

A growing number of famous actresses appear in the Academy exhibition catalogues during this period. A representative example of aristocratic handling was John Collier's portrait of Miss Julia Neilson (R.A. 1892) executed in the style of Lawrence, and an even more glamorous type was Walter Spindler's portrait of Sarah Bernhardt (R.A. 1893) in which the sitter is surrounded by flowers, furs, and ornate furnishing.

128

Perhaps no better demonstration of this shift can be provided than the firing of Clement Scott as the theatre critic for the Daily Telegraph during this period for suggesting that acting necessarily corrupted a woman's morality. The force of the combined protest of West End theatre managers to the editor finally forced him to dismiss Scott. See Lynton Hudson, The English Stage (London: George Harrap, 1951), p. 122.

129

Weekly Sun (July 29, 1894), p. 4.

130

The Daily Chronicle (July 12, 1894), p. 3 used the adjective 'lifelike', and the St. James Gazette (July 20, 1894), p. 6. used 'characteristic' and the Daily News (July 12, 1894), p. 6 used 'effective economy of means'.

131

Wearing, London Stage.

132

'Madame Sans-Gene', Era (June 30, 1894), p. 7.

133

Letter to John Lane dated Friday, June 15, 1894 in the Bodley Head Collection of Sir Allen Lane (Westfield College, University of London).

134

Escott, England, p. 548.

135

'An Apostle of the Grotesque', Sketch (April 10, 1895), p.

561. He reiterated the same point later in an interview by Arthur H. Lawrence, 'Mr. Beardsley and His Work', Idler (March 1897), p. 109.

136

Dauphin Meunier, 'Madame Rejane', Yellow Book II (July 1894), pp. 197-199.

137

Times (April 20, 1894), p. 3.

138

Margaret Armour, 'Aubrey Beardsley and the Decadents', Magazine of Art 20 (1896), pp. 11-12.

139

Whitehall Review (July 21, 1894), p. 13, and Globe (July 21, 1894), p. 6.

140

Wearing, London Stage.

141

'Why I Wrote 'The Transgressor'', Sketch (April 4, 1894), p. 445.

142

Archer, Theatrical World 1894, pp. 41-47 and Era (February 3, 1894), p. 11. assessed the play favourably, while Theatre (March 3, 1894), p. 159, and Stage (February 2, 1894), p. 13 disliked the piece.

143

One of her contemporaries described her as usually playing the 'passionate modern woman who defies Society's conventions' - see Bettany, Theatre, p. 246. Although the subject would have doubtlessly proven disconcerting, in addition the critics would have probably disliked Forster's style which was closely associated with the impressionism of Walter Sickert and the New English Art Club which will be discussed later in the chapter.

144

The novel was first published in 1848 and the play in 1852. In 1890, 1892 and 1894 Sarah Bernhardt acted in the piece, while Duse appeared in it in 1893 and 1894, see Wearing, London Stage.

145

Examples of these are 'The Drama: Sarah Bernhardt', Life (July 7, 1894), p. 17, and 'Notes from Theatres', Sketch (July 4, 1894), p. 510.

146

Reade, Beardsley, p. 341 notes that this indicates the

illustration does not necessarily represent Beardsley's conception of the play. However, I am not interested in his original intentions as much as his later strategy of exhibiting the deliberately retitled work in the Yellow Book and the picture's public significance in its new context. As Reade observes, like many of his contemporaries, Beardsley was fascinated with the play going to visit Dumas the Younger in the summer of 1895. He executed another version of the subject later in 1897, see Reade, Beardsley, no. 484.

147

Augustin Filon, The English Stage (London: John Milne, 1897), p. 264.

148

Alexandre Dumas the Younger, The Lady of the Camèlias. Translated by Edmund Gosse (London: William Heinemann, 1902), p. 105. The details of the mirror and candle were described in the English translation of the play, see Alexandre Dumas the Younger, Camille. Translated by Matilda Heron (London: John Dicks, 1885), p. 6.

149

St. James Budget (October 26, 1894), p. 28.

150

Queen (November 3, 1894), p. 789.

151

I am not suggesting that Beardsley was directly inspired by this picture which was actually later than the original publication of the drawing in April, but rather that the Yellow Book's public probably would have made this connection.

152

'Notes from the Theatres', Sketch (May 31, 1893), p. 228. For a positive assessment of Duse's purified interpretation, consult 'La Dame aux Camèlias', Theatre (June 1, 1894), pp. 331-332.

153

Beardsley expressed his appreciation of Bernhardt's acting in a letter to Andre Raffalovitch dated May 28, 1895 - see Maas et al., eds. Letters of Beardsley, p. 88.

154

In the nineteenth century putrescent carried particular connotations of moral degeneration and weakness.

155

Reade, Beardsley, p. 346.

156

Such extravagant dress was typical of the upper echelons of the

demi-monde (e.g. Marguerite Gautier) whose representations fascinated and shocked the majority of the middle viewers in the 1890s.

157

Max Beerbohm, 'A Defence of Cosmetics', Yellow Book I (April 1894), pp. 65-82. See pp.74-75 for a description of the toilet-table ritual.

158

Ibid., p. 76.

159

Westminster Gazette (April 18, 1894), p. 3.

160

Beerbohm, Yellow Book, p. 68.

161

Ibid., p. 73.

162

'Paula in the Provinces: A Chat with Miss Cynthia Brooke', To-Day (January 19, 1895), p. 351.

163

A Christian, 'Letter to the Editor', Daily Telegraph (October 16, 1894), p. 5.

164

A.J.M., 'Letter to the Editor', Daily Telegraph (October 19, 1894), p. 3.

165

It should be noted that there was a crucial difference between whores looking respectable, and respectable women looking like whores. The former established decent women as socially desirable and normal, making prostitutes unhealthy deviants, while the latter disturbingly suggested the reverse.

166

'Delicate' was the description used in the St. James Budget (January 25, 1895), p. 15 and 'charming' appeared in the Daily Chronicle (January 17, 1895), p. 3.

167

Westminster Budget (January 25, 1895), p. 18.

168

Graphic (January 19, 1895), p. 59. The only really noticeable difference in the portraits of Mrs. Campbell and Winnifred Emery being the thicker (i.e. 'more natural' and 'healthier') waist of the latter.

169

Sydney Grundy, The New Woman (London: Chiswick Press, 1894), p. 102. It should be noted that the patronizing tone of the conclusion put both women and the working class in their places. Neither could aspire to equal status with a male Oxford graduate from a distinguished family. The class aspects of this snobbery are discussed in Hanson, 'Theatre audiences', p. 417, who chauvinistically ignores Margery's sexual oppression!

170

'The New Woman', Stage (September 6, 1894), p. 12. See also Archer, Theatrical World 1894 (September 5, 1894), pp. 223-32, and 'The New Woman', Theatre (October 1, 1894), pp. 186-87.

171

This was reported in 'The New Woman', Era (September 8, 1894), p. 9. The celebrities included Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander and Julian Neilson.

172

'Mr. Sydney Grundy's 'New Woman'', Westminster Gazette (August 20, 1894), p. 8.

173

This was reproduced in Charles Hiatt, Picture Posters (London: George Bell, 1895), p. 269. I have been unable to verify whether this design was actually used as a promotional poster for either the performance of the play or its subsequent publication. It should be noted that the woman does not particularly resemble Alma Murray, nor does the design appear among the many reviews and photographs of the play I have examined. Similarly it was not published in the 1894 edition of Grundy's play. Perhaps Morrow was simply attempting to secure a commission with the design. In any case, while the use of the design remains unknown, it does demonstrate that other artists opted to portray the New Woman rather than the traditional heroine.

174

Speaker (April 28, 1894), p. 469, and Spectator (November 17, 1894), p. 700. Since P. Wilson Steer's contributions were not of theatrical subjects, they are not discussed in this chapter.

175

Denys Sutton, Walter Sickert (London: Michael Joseph, 1976), p. 76. Among others at the dinner were George Moore, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and Richard Garnett. The affair was held at the Hotel d'Italie in Old Compton Street on April 14, 1894.

176

See an undated letter on Yellow Book office stationery from Harland to Sickert in the Bodley Head Collection of Sir Allen Lane

(Westfield College, University of London) returning the manuscripts since the magazine was already 'too full up'.

177

Both pictures show the performer in a servantgirl's costume which she usually wore for her well known song, 'It all comes from stickin' to a soldier'. Consult Ronald Pickvance, 'The Magic of the Halls and Sickert', Apollo 76 (April 1962), p. 113. The 1887 dating of Sickert's painting is suggested by Wendy Baron, Sickert (London: Phaidon, 1973), p. 26.

178

Sutton, Sickert, p. 50.

179

These different expressions are discussed in W. Macqueen Pope, The Melodies Linger On: The Story of Music Hall (London: W. H. Allen, 1950), pp. 10-15. A contemporary analysis of the working class origin of the vast majority of music-hall performers is found in 'Music Hall Business - Parts I and II', St. James Gazette (April 21, 1892), pp. 5-6, and (April 27, 1892), pp. 4-5.

180

Francis Forster was one of the only others, although his output of such scenes seems to have been quite limited.

181

An early appreciator of Sickert's music-hall pictures was his friend, D.S. MacColl, the art critic of the Spectator.

182

D.S.M. [MacColl], 'Art: Recent Exhibitions', Spectator (March 2, 1895), p. 295.

183

For a discussion of the growing conservatism of music-hall entertainment towards the end of the century, see Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900', Journal of Social History 7 (Summer 1974), pp. 490-497.

184

George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1888), pp. 244-45.

185

See, 'The Coster in Society', Graphic (October 29, 1892), p. 519, and D. F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974), pp. 66-67.

186

The St. James Gazette described the Lion Comique as 'the most

vulgar and objectionable creature that ever faced the public' since 'whatever wit these gentlemen possessed turned almost invariably on drunkenness and indecency'. See 'Music Hall Business', St. James Gazette (April 21, 1892), p. 5.

187

Arthur Symons, Harper's, p. 859.

188

Wilson, Beardsley, p. 6.

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Hugh Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics', Blackwood's Magazine (June 1895), p. 841. For a perceptive discussion of the social threat of the New Woman and her links with the working class, see Dowling, Nineteenth Century Fiction, pp. 434-453. As she observes, Cockney was a frequent term of abuse levelled at New Women writers such as George Egerton and Sarah Grand.

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Armour, Magazine of Art, pp. 10-11.

Section Four: Spectacles and Spectators:

Beardsley's Images of Masquerades

Closely associated with the theatre and pictures of actresses were Beardsley's images of masqueraders which also featured prominently among his contributions to the Yellow Book. As in the case of the theatre, the masquerade was both a spectacle that was performed and a pleasureable object for leisured consumption. Like the Yellow Book, West End plays, concerts, and even prostitution, masquerades were part of growing number of marketable commodities designed to fill ever-expanding hours of middle-class leisure. Whether one was involved in producing the spectacle or being entertained by it depended on the type of fancy dress ball attended and one's precise socio-economic status.

The fact that masquerades were principally associated with women during the late Victorian period is scarcely surprising since they revolved around costume, role-playing, and social etiquette which were all considered particular spheres of female expertise. While large numbers of men attended such events, most did so in the capacity of onlookers being entertained, rather than performer-participants. Certainly it was women's involvement that attracted most attention. Symptomatic of the situation were the complaints of contemporary commentators during the 1890s that men increasingly wore standard evening attire instead of fancy dress. Such observations were supported by the fact that the intricacies of costume design constituted an absorbing

preoccupation in such female forums as Queen and Woman but were conspicuously absent from male sporting and financial papers. When the subject of masquerades did appear in the male press, it was handled quite differently. Illustrated weeklies of the Pick-Me-Up variety presented numerous illustrations of female masqueraders as glamorous, exotic, and sexually alluring objects of male desire. As Arden Holt, a leading Victorian authority on the subject observed, 'There are few occasions when a woman had a better opportunity of showing her charms to advantage than at a Fancy Ball.'¹ The extent of her charm being measured by her ability to attract male attention.

But what do such conventional representations of female sexuality have to do with emerging discourses on the New Woman? Clearly such feminine stereotyping was directly opposed to the New Woman's objectives of self-determination and fulfillment. However, once again, the unorthodoxy of Beardsley's masquerade imagery in the Yellow Book provides a curious point of intersection. By repeatedly overstepping the carefully set limits of public decency, these pictures appear to have raised the same disturbing questions about the nature of sexual differences and the social norms regulating sexual activity which were endlessly debated in conjunction with the New Woman. Instead of presenting the masquerade as an occasion of light-hearted heterosexual flirtation, Beardsley's illustrations highlighted its more sinister undertones of seduction, promiscuity, and perversity, as well as raising fears of social insecurity and dislocation. Predictably what charmed his own circle of Bodley Head writers, authors and avant-garde cultural

critics, infuriated the vast majority of press reviewers. It seems worth noting that both supportive insiders and hostile outsiders ultimately attributed similar meanings to Beardsley's masquerade images, despite the fact that they seem to have interpreted them according to different sets of cultural criteria. The images' ability to work on more than one level considerably extended the perimeters of the debate surrounding the Yellow Book.

At this point, two difficulties in examining this material should be acknowledged. First of all, as in the case of Beardsley's 'Comedy Ballet' series, many reviewers of the Yellow Book seem to have been reluctant to tackle the issues of sexual deviancy directly, preferring to hint at the problem obliquely. Inevitably this leaves the modern researcher a considerable latitude of interpretation. By strictly confining my comparative visual and verbal material to the mid-1890s, I have tried to avoid imposing a twentieth century psycho-sexual analysis onto nineteenth century commentators. A further difficulty is presented by the paucity of information about commercially-run masquerades of this period. Most of the surviving records and modern researchers deal with the grand-scale Society masquerade balls mounted in court circles. As will be examined below, these were very different types of affairs which bore little relation to their less extravagant counterparts. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, it seems important to tackle this large body of related images which evidently fascinated and perturbed the majority of the Yellow Book's reviewers.

This chapter will begin by examining evidence of how these pictures operated for the elite circle of Beardsley's friends and Bodley Head associates. Their ardently francophile interpretations will be weighed against more popular conceptions of French poster illustration, the Parisian carnival, and English masquerades as represented in mainstream, middle-class periodicals of the period. Then the individual case studies of Beardsley's design for the cover of the first Yellow Book and his frontispiece for John Davidson's plays will be investigated with particular reference to the masked balls at Covent Garden. The illustrations' specifically English content and connotations are of special interest since they rendered Beardsley's social and sexual taboo breaking all the more intolerably close to the majority of reviewers. In the last section of the chapter, additional examples of Beardsley's masqueraders from the Yellow Book and other magazines will be considered in relation to a number of associated cartoons which highlight the issues the general public seems to have found so disturbing. In conclusion, an overall assessment of the effectiveness of such visual representations of deviance will be offered.

I French Masquerade Imagery

Like the theatre, costumes fascinated Beardsley. Extracts from both his letters and the recollections of old friends reveal how much he enjoyed dressing up to create a startling or comic impression. Henry Harland recalled how:

He [Beardsley] loved a romp, a masquerade, a harmless

practical joke. One evening I was seated in my study, when the servant brought a visiting-card, on which was written "Miss Tibbett and Master Tibbett". I went into the drawing room, and there was Miss Beardsley with a tall boy in an Eton jacket. The tall boy in the Eton jacket - Master Tibbett, if you please - was Aubrey, jubilant, laughing for delight in his own prank. (2)

Another more notorious example was furnished by Beardsley, himself, in a much quoted and debated comment in a letter of September 1893 to John Lane: 'I am going to Jimmie's on Thursday night dressed up as a tart and mean to have a regular spree.'³ In this case, Jimmie's was a reference to the St. James Restaurant in Picadilly, a well known venue of prostitution and other illicit activities. Used by a number of modern writers to marginalize Beardsley as a transvestite and latent homosexual, it nevertheless locates one area of sexual anxiety surrounding the notion of fancy-dress.⁴ As we shall see, it was an anxiety acutely experienced by many reviewers of Beardsley's Yellow Book illustrations in the 1890s.

Certainly many of Beardsley's friends at the Bodley Head were similarly intrigued by various notions of masquerading. In all likelihood, much of the interest in avant-garde circles was stimulated by contact with French ballet, cabaret, pantomime and masquerade. It seems significant that almost immediately following Beardsley's return from Paris in May 1893, masquerade motifs assumed an unprecedented significance in his work. This French connection is perhaps best encapsulated by his contemporary, Aurthur Symons:

The art of the ballet counts for much, in the evolution of many favourite effects of contemporary drawing,...And

pantomime, too, in the French and correct, rather than in the English and incorrect, sense of that word, has had its significant influence [on Beardsley]. In those pathetic gaities of Willette, in the windy laughter of the frivolities of Cheret, it is the masquerade, the English clown or acrobat seen at the Folies-Bergere, painted people mimicking puppets, who have begotten this masquerading humanity of posters and illustrated papers. And the point of view is the point of view of Pierrot - ... Verlaine's "Pierrot gamin".(5)

Symons' interpretation of Beardsley's masqueraders as the visual equivalent of Verlaine's 'Pierrot gamin' suggests they are supreme symbols of detached and disillusioned artifice, or in other words, elegant relics from the past who survive by becoming hardened and cynical in a modern age which has lost its convictions.

There can be little doubt that the image of the Parisian carnival reproduced in French poetry, literature, and posters contributed to the production of Beardsley's fancy dress imagery. The fact that the artist was familiar with the mystical masquerade symbolism of Verlaine's poetry would have been obvious to readers of Salomé since Les Fetes Galantes had appeared on the princess's toilet-table (fig. 75). Beardsley's interest in French poster design was also common knowledge. He, Dudley Hardy, and Jules Cheret had been interviewed on the subject of posters in a July 1894 issue of the New Review, and later in the following April he asked a Sketch writer, 'What would Paris be without her Cheret, her Lautrec, her Willette?'⁶

The New Review article actually reproduced Cheret's 'Skating Theatre' (fig.124) which was a typical example of the artist's numerous

advertisements for bal masques in Paris during the carnival seasons of the 1880s and 1890s.⁷ Certainly such posters must have provided the most logical points of reference for Beardsley's pictures as far as the francophile circle of Bodley Head initiates were concerned. However, the case for Symons' connection of Beardsley and Cheret seems to have been based not so much on precise stylistic factors, but rather on the grounds that such poster artists were symbols of French modernity.⁸ In fact the loosely outlined figures, dynamic movement, swirling draperies and crowded composition of Cheret's poster more immediately resemble the work of English illustrators such as Dudley Hardy. As we shall see, in many ways, Beardsley's opponents found his different hard-edged black and white style much more threatening.

While an alienated, Francophile interpretation of Beardsley's masqueraders evidently fascinated his own circle, and to some extent has been perpetuated by modern art historians, it is important to realize that this remains a highly selective reading.⁹ Furthermore, it is one that is heavily weighted in favour of 'high' art precedents, and the evidence of sensitive insiders. At this point, the imbalance should be redressed by pointing out that the majority of Beardsley's contemporaries actually applied a different set of cultural criteria to the same pictures. It is these largely forgotten readings that need to be recovered and examined in order to understand the scope of the controversy surrounding Beardsley's masqueraders.

Although it is unlikely that the majority of Beardsley's viewers

were acquainted with the intricacies of French Decadence, they scarcely could have avoided an increasing awareness of the Parisian carnival and French poster illustration. In addition to the previously mentioned interview with Cheret, a special collection of French posters was exhibited in London at the Royal Aquarium during October and November, 1894. The event was organized by Edward Bella, a leading poster collector, and the honorary committee included other collectors like Joseph Clarke, such connoisseurs as Gleeson White and a number of artists including A. S. Hartrick, and L. Ravenhill. Although French posters predominated (Cheret's work alone amounted to over fifty works, in addition to many examples by Lautrec, Willette, Grasset, Steinlen and others), English posters by such artists as Beardsley, Hardy, the Beggarstaffs, Ravenhill and Crane were also featured. An illustrated catalogue and numerous press reviews helped publicize the images. It should be noted that several of Cheret designs were advertisements for Parisian masked balls, including two posters for what was probably the most famous event held at the Theatre de l'Opera.¹⁰

II Nineteenth Century English Masquerades

However, for most members of the English public such first hand encounters with French masquerade imagery were relatively few and far between. In general, information about Parisian masked balls was more readily available from such secondary sources as London illustrated weeklies, where less emphasis was placed on French authenticity and more on explaining the event to the uninitiated. Mars's 'The Carnival in Paris'

(fig. 125) published in the Sketch provides a typical case in point. Such illustrations were part of a sudden explosion of masquerade subjects in English magazines during the middle nineties. Page after page of the Sketch and Pick-Me-Up featured pierrots, harlequins, ballet girls, and other costumed revellers. Ranging in function from various decorative motifs (fig. 126) to such full page caricatures as Phil May's 'At A Fancy Ball' (fig. 127), the public interest in fancy-dress escapades seemed insatiable. Closer examination of this material soon reveals the important fact that most of it actually carried specifically English rather than French connotations. This requires further investigation since, apart from a privileged inside circle, most critics of the Yellow Book regarded Beardsley's masqueraders as inhabitants of London rather than Paris.

However, before turning to this problem which will re-emerge in connection with specific images, it is essential to understand what the terms masquerade, bal masque or fancy dress ball, as it was most often called, connoted to different social groups in late Victorian society. Most nineteenth century commentators seem to have felt that the fancy dress ball was a hybrid modern offshoot of seventeenth and eighteenth century court masques on the one hand, and the evening entertainment of London pleasure gardens on the other. This dual legacy of exclusivity and relative accessibility continued on into the nineteenth century when London's costume balls could be divided into three basic types: those opulent, extremely elitist, Society affairs associated with court and artistocratic circles; those mounted by middle-class clubs and

organizations, and finally large commercial functions. The first two categories were strictly private, while the latter, like its pleasure garden predecessors, was open to all who could afford the costs of admission.

Certainly the masquerade's longest-standing association was with the court: stemming from the seventeenth century pagaentry of Ben Jonson's masques for the Stuarts, to John James Heidegger's extravaganzas for Georges I and II.¹¹ Victoria had continued the tradition mounting three much publicized royal costume balls: a Plantagenet Ball in 1842, a Powder Ball in 1845, and finally a Restoration Ball in 1851. After Albert's death, other leading members of the royal family and court circle took the initiative periodically organizing such extravagant affairs as the Marlborough House Ball of 1874 thrown by the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Devonshire House Ball of 1899.¹² These along with an infinite number of similar, smaller scale, affairs formed an important part of the Season's amusements. Most hostesses planned their balls on a particular theme and expected guests to conform by having elaborate costumes especially ordered for the event - often from leading English and French designers.¹³

Although invitations to these events were strictly controlled, they acquired a public significance through press reports which dwelled on the participant's display of wealth and status. A typical example of this coverage was an illustration published in the Queen showing the leading

female costumes from the Bal Poudré at Warwick Castle of 1895 (fig. 128). A cursory glance at the descriptions of the fabrics and trimmings indicates that costumes of this quality were clearly only available to Society's upper ten thousand. The sheer extravagance of this particular Warwick Castle ball was singled out for criticism in the pages of To-Day, a socialist weekly. In a cartoon entitled 'Paupers Splendid and Otherwise' (fig. 129), a ragged beggar is shown walking barefoot in the snow carrying posters that announce the event. His genuine hardship is contrasted with the forthcoming decadent spectacle. A number of cartoons in Punch by George Du Maurier also focused on the masquerade as a fashionable Society past-time. 'Who'd Have Thought It?' of June 13, 1885 (fig. 130) depicts a masquerade encounter in an elegant interior replete with gourmet buffet and servants. The humour lies in the elderly participants' totally inappropriate choice of costume - Mary Queen of Scots being famous for her youthful beauty and Horace Walpole being a character of cultural refinement and intellect. The point of the joke, of course, depends on both a knowledge of history and the conventions of masquerading. Similarly 'Cold Comfort' of May 1895 (fig. 131) firmly locates the practice of masquerading in a conservative sexual and social framework. Here two fashionable ladies are supervising a children's fancy dress party and reminiscing over their own experiences. The elder laments that she can no longer wear her wasp costume of ten years ago. The fact that she is now too old and overweight for such a daringly tight and revealing outfit implies a loss of her feminine charms and the power to attract and influence men.

However, towards the end of the century, as the growing trend of masquerade illustration in magazines indicates, interest in fancy dress had spread beyond the confines of Society. Increasing numbers of middle-class groups organized their own more modest variations which were held in clubs, schools, and rented premises. Their costumes were usually home-made or hired. If the group or arrangement of the ball was especially noteworthy, it could enter the public limelight. A case in point was the fancy dress ball at St. John's Wood Art Schools in 1893 which was covered by a Sketch writer who observed that the usual crowd of curious working-class spectators (i.e. 'errand boys, little girls and a policeman') gathered outside the entrance to watch the spectacle making comments like 'Crikey! ain't she a daisy neither?'¹⁴ This pattern of working class exclusion was typical of such affairs where again, invitations were mandatory.

The only form of nineteenth century masquerade which did not directly screen the participants were commercially-run balls which instead relied on the less effective controls of admission charges. These were notoriously risqué affairs where all classes of society could be encountered. Of course, fewer members of the working classes could afford entry, so their numbers were fairly limited. However, many less than respectable theatrical, musical, and ballet people were granted free admission, in addition to artists covering the event, and in some disreputable instances, prostitutes plying their trade. The fact that one could never be sure who one would meet was either a source of appeal or anxiety, depending on one's point of view. The best known examples of this

type during the nineties were the Covent Garden Fancy Dress Balls held in the Royal Opera House.

III Covent Garden Fancy Dress Balls

Although the notion of fancy dress potentially carried a wide range of connotations at the end of the century, most of Beardsley's reviewers seem to have had little difficulty assigning a particular set of meanings to his illustrations of masqueraders which will now be examined in more detail. The first of Beardsley's Yellow Book images to utilize masquerade motifs was an instant sensation due to its prominent location on the front and back covers of the magazine's first volume (figs. 132-133). As the cover which launched the magazine, Beardsley's design was widely reproduced in such places as the Sketch's interview with the new editors, and in the Weekly Sun's review of the first volume.¹⁵ Indeed, this was the first encounter that many reviewers and members of the public had with Beardsley's style.

The mild praise of Beardsley's associates was quickly drowned by a chorus of horrified outrage. While Beardsley's few supporters - Frederick Hamerton writing in the second Yellow Book, and Katherine Tynan in the Weekly Irish Times, favoured his 'charmingly eccentric' style, neither attributed any particular significance to the subject matter. In fact, their praise was carefully limited to formal considerations - Hamerton only reluctantly admitting as an afterthought that Beardsley did have a disturbing ^{tendency} towards 'the representation of types without intellect or

morals'.¹⁶ Hamerton's explicit disavowal of the subject's importance, and Tynan's silence on the issue contrasted sharply with the mainstream of critical opinion which found the cover a piece of 'audacious vulgarity'.¹⁷

For some the cover must have proven a deterrent against further explorations of the contents, as the Pall Mall Gazette could not resist humourously pointing out:

The producers of the Yellow Book told us in their prospectus that it was to be a book we should be glad to put on our shelves when we had done with it. Some people are glad to do anything, but the publishers have dealt with the promise in curious irony, by making the cover so intolerably hideous that you immediately bundle it away where you can only see the back.(18)

Evidently its glaring modernity was an embarrassment to establishment critics who immediately identified it as a product of the New Art, as Vanity Fair's writer observed:

From Messrs. Elkin Mathews and John Lane there comes Volume I of the much expected new quarterly, "The Yellow Book"; and it comes in a wondrous ugly cover. It will be hailed with subdued but none the less earnest joy by the New School of Art, or the New Schools, or individuals who magnify themselves into schools; for is it not a precious thing? (19)

These accusations of 'newness' seem to have carried unpleasant connotations of a crass commercialism that was exacerbated by the design's location. As discussed earlier in the second section, the term New Art frequently applied to mechanically mass-produced works (e.g. posters, graphic illustration). In a similar sense, the term New Journalism (e.g. interviews, gossip columns, short amusing articles) was juxtaposed to the notion of old-fashioned literary quality (e.g. serious essays, lengthy

critical reviews). Evidently the prominently displayed cover smacked of mere illustrated journalism, as opposed to the magazine's inside plates decorously hidden behind protective tissue-paper. Sensational, eye-catching, and above all functionally bearing the title, price and publisher's name, the cover possibly undermined the notions of artistic quality the promotional advertising had promised as a feature of the Yellow Book. As mentioned in connection with his pictures of actresses, this would have disappointed reviewers who expected more from a five shilling periodical. In fact, critics may have found it difficult to reconcile Beardsley's dual role of graphic illustrator on the outside and fine artist on the inside of the magazine. Believing in the separation of 'high art' and commercial illustration, they may have been uncomfortable with Beardsley's irreverent mixture of both.

Even more disturbing than Beardsley's violation of artistic conventions was his flaunting of middle-class sexual morality. In this respect, the remarks of the Whitehall Review and Academy were especially revealing. The former writing:

...we would suggest a reconsideration of the cover.. That it has some mystic meaning we can well believe; but it also has a most marked resemblance to a poster drawn by a schoolboy for a peep show of a fat woman; and whenever it meets our eye in a shop window it urges us almost uncontrollably to throw stones. (20)

The Academy elaborated by suggesting the '...the design was a joke of a third rate order, sent back as unacceptable from the office of Pick-Me-Up.²¹ The references to a schoolboy's peep show and Pick-Me-Up (which as previously discussed was prosecuted in July 1894

for indecency) were essentially accusations of voyeurism. According to these writers Beardsley was a peeping Tom who had the audacity to force his lewd observations onto an unsuspecting public. But what was so offensive about these figures on the Yellow Book's covers? Unlike his Salomé illustrations, there were no exposed or emphasized genitalia and none of the characters were placed in the usual seductive peep show or Pick-Me-Up supplement poses.²² Apparently, instead of focusing on individual characteristics, the critics' anxiety seems to have been caused by the figures problematic relationship to each other. On the back, sexual flirtation was implied by the exchanged gazes of the two central figures, while on the front the interest displayed by the person on the right in the woman's shoulder suggests a similar objective.

Such flirtation also carried the more dangerous connotations of promiscuity and prostitution. Throughout the nineteenth century masquerades were condemned by moral reformers on two basic grounds. The first was that they provided a haunt for prostitutes who were able to ply their trade largely unobserved in the bizarre surroundings; while the second involved their corruptive influence on innocent young girls. Stimulated by their love of finery, possibly the consumption of alcohol and the apparent suspension of everyday social and sexual taboos, young girls were considered particularly vulnerable to seduction.²³ This was a connection that had been visually represented by such earlier artists as Cruikshank in the third illustration of his series 'The Drunkard's Children' (1847) which portrayed an abandoned young girl with her pimp and clients in a dancing room where a masquerade

advertisement was noticeably displayed on the wall. Similarly Abraham Solomon's Drowned, Drowned (1860) showed a drowned prostitute's seducer in fancy dress, having just come from a masquerade.²⁴ One of the main differences between these earlier representations and Beardsley's cover design is the fact that he breaks with the tradition of presenting the woman as the victim of sexual immorality. Instead she is conspicuously enjoying herself.

Further clouding the issue was the critics' uncertainty over the sexual identity of the right-hand figure. Philip Hamerton specifically identified the person as a man gazing at the beauties of a woman's shoulder, while the Spectator critic described the character as a tragic muse.²⁵ As discussed in the first section, even the vaguest suggestion of lesbianism was extremely disconcerting. Adding insult to injury, the last straw for many of these reviewers was the bizarre quality of the costumes and setting. In fact, the Figaro critic's precise reading of this last factor provides many interesting insights: 'The cover, which is bright yellow with black printing suggests a nightmare after a Covent Garden ball and lobster salad.'²⁶

Precisely what were these Covent Garden balls? Initiated in 1892 by Augustus Harris, manager of the Royal Opera House, the balls were designed to utilize the opera house during the intervals between various scheduled operas and recitals.²⁷ They were planned as profit-making ventures that were widely advertised through posters, leaflets and the press. It should be noted that these types of balls had long been popular events in

Victorian London. Earlier in the 40s and 50s, Julian's Bal Masques held in the Drury Lane Theatre had similarly attracted huge crowds and publicity.²⁸ Essentially the Royal Opera House was transformed into a ballroom by the addition of a temporary dance floor, and lavish decorations on various themes. The price of admission depended upon whether one took part in the costumed festivities on the amphitheatre floor (2/6) or else booked more exclusive seats, ranging up to private boxes from which the ball could be observed in privacy (5-10 guineas).²⁹ The opera orchestra provided the music and an optional buffet supper was available for 10/6.

During the early nineties these events were a veritable rage. No expense was spared on the installation of decorations. The themes of 1894 included a recreation of the Vauxhall pleasure gardens, and 'the sunny south' which was a representation of Monte Carlo. Special backdrop paintings were commissioned and huge supplies of flowers, foliage, lanterns and coloured streamers heightened the effect. Tremendous excitement was also generated by the awarding of prizes for the best costumes which were usually reported in the press often with photographs or artist's drawings. The Sketch provides two typical examples of this coverage with Dudley Hardy's costume drawings of 1893 (fig. 134) and photographs of the women prize-winners of 1894 (fig. 135). Interestingly the latter included a photograph of Miss Rose Dearing as the New Woman (fig. 136) wearing the familiar tailored suit with wide mutton sleeves and a short skirt over a cuffed white shirt and bow tie. Her outfit closely resembles that of Punch's bicycling woman from 'A

Valentyne' (fig. 8) and the woman purchasing books on the cover of the Yellow Book's prospectus (fig. 39). In contemporary magazine articles reporting on the Covent Garden balls references were made to other women wearing costumes from New Women's novels (e.g. 'the Heavenly Twins' from Sarah Grand's novel of 1893 of the same title). These were the fanciful masquerading New Women which the previously cited Vanity Fair writer had claimed were the only manifestations of an otherwise mythical phenomenon. (See section one fn. 83.) Significantly the vogue for such costumes at these public balls indicates that the notion of the New Woman had a popular currency and was not simply debated in the confines of upper-middle-class circles. However, whether lower-middle-class or working-class masqueraders were as interested in the issue remains open to speculation.³⁰ In any case, participants evidently enjoyed such photographic souvenirs of the event, judging from Alfred Ellis' photographic cabin in the auditorium which provided two portraits for ten shillings (fig. 137). The expansion of photographic reproduction no doubt assisted the promotion of the event.

The role of the participants varied widely depending their social status and the type of admission purchased. The very wealthy usually arrived quite late (around 10 - 11 p.m.) and inconspicuously watched proceedings from their boxes. Members of the middle classes who usually arrived earlier emulated their betters from their cheaper seats in the stalls or dress circle. In addition to their spatial distance from the event, onlookers usually distinguished themselves from participants by wearing standard evening attire instead of fancy dress. Provided they

were properly chaperoned, no social stigma seems to have been attached to women watching the ball which was treated like any other form of West End theatre.

However, a different set of criteria applied to the socially and sexually inferior performers who created the spectacle on the ground floor. This was essentially a very mixed group where individuals were constantly milling around and mingling. As Leonore Davidoff has observed, Covent Garden balls were something 'young men from good society might slip off to "as a joke"'.³¹ Of course this was a male joke since female relatives were left behind pursuing more respectable avenues of recreation. Apparently the costumed festivities were especially popular with City workers, the Sketch observing that large contingents of the dancers originated from the Stock Exchange and several of London's main hospitals.³² While men from all walks of life could attend the ball without damaging their reputation, as indicated, the situation for women was less straightforward. Judging from the scanty available evidence, the balls were very popular with certain sectors of working women (i.e. shop assistants, clerks, dress-makers), particularly those in the theatrical business.³³ It should be noted that entry fees were waived for members of the orchestra and ballet, as well as for numerous theatrical (primarily music-hall) celebrities who enlivened the event with their appearance and impersonations.³⁴

Free admission was also extended to artists covering the ball, as Dudley Hardy's sketch of masqueraders on a note to Neil Forsyth (Harris'

assistant) requesting his complimentary tickets indicates (fig. 138). It is significant that Hardy portrays himself as a spectator in formal dress, fumbling for his missing tickets. The artist's discomfort is magnified by the gaze of his masked and costumed companion. Although the identity of the figure is well disguised by the domino, it can be assumed Hardy is depicting himself in the embarrassing position of not being able to provide for the woman he is escorting. This particular male crisis was frequently the focus of many middle-class cartoons of the period as 'Wicked Position' from Ross's Stage Whispers demonstrates (fig. 139). Although Hardy shows himself being compromised, the framework which makes the joke intelligible assumes men are superior spectators even when they partake in the ground floor revelries. Male participation is normally confined to paying for and watching the display. In contrast, women have to earn their admission by providing the entertainment - creating a spectacle of themselves for male consumption.

Hardy continued to attend the balls throughout the nineties, contributing numerous drawings to various illustrated weeklies, including the Sketch. In fact, his special reputation for masquerade subjects among his contemporaries sheds light on the St. James Gazette's review of Beardsley's Yellow Book cover:

The outside cover suggests a companion volume of the Sketch; if Mr. Aubrey Beardsley is responsible for it, he was in a very Dudley-Hardyish mood when he designed this fat-faced yellow masking female with a line around her head.(35)

Here again Beardsley's design is firmly placed in the context of illustrated journalism rather than 'high' art, a fact which, as previously

noted in connection with his pictures of actresses, disappointed reviewers who expected more from a five shilling publication. Equally important was the fact that with few exceptions this graphic illustration concentrated on English masquerade scenes rather than on French imports. The identifiably English subjects depicted by such artists as Dudley Hardy were consistent with the widely reiterated opinion of journalists that London no longer played second fiddle to Parisian cultural trend-setting. A Sketch writer was explicit:

A visit to the bals masques at Covent Garden Theatre will show how many of us are gay when the fog, the County Council, the Sabbaterians, and the income-tax will allow. Save by an undesirable license, the opera balls of Paris are no whit more lively or amusing than ours, either to those who go to look on, or those who are there to dance, flirt, show their gay costumes and find an excuse for being out o'bed at the hour when wiseacres are stupidly storing up health against the time when they cannot enjoy it.(36)

At this point it should be emphasized that the critics' English location of Beardsley's Yellow Book cover was not simply a case of mistaken attribution or deliberate misinterpretation. Although Beardsley was genuinely excited by French poster illustration, I think it can be convincingly demonstrated that his masquerade subjects were actually drawn from English prototypes and his own Covent Garden connections. With respect to the former, his cover design continued a tradition of masquerade illustration which contrasted the spectators and spectacle. The frontispiece to Chicard's The Bal Masque of 1848 (fig. 140) provides a case in point: where the spectators wearing evening dress in the upper register gaze at the masqueraders below in amusement. One woman even goes to the length of following the scene with binoculars. In contrast, those

in the lower register provide the entertainment. It is significant that the costumes of the two women are much more sophisticated than those of the men - two of whom are not dressed up, and a third whose matador outfit consists of a minor variation on the basic evening coat without tails. The accompanying text reinforces the notion that it is woman's forms which are on display.

Beardsley simply separated the two standard views further, placing the revellers on the front cover and the onlookers on the back. Yet the Beardsley design is one with a potentially subversive difference. The spectators who clearly occupy the private boxes (see figs. 141-142 for interior plans of the opera house) are disturbingly shown in fancy dress - a person on the left wears a mask, and another in the centre appears in the ruffled collar of pierrot. Furthermore, the possibly flirtatious interaction of the two central characters which is suggested by the woman's exposed shoulders and her sidelong glance towards pierrot disrupts the notion of the onlookers being more refined and better behaved than the masqueraders. In fact, the latter have invaded the private boxes obliterating the physical and social space normally separating the two groups.

Beardsley's particular connection with Covent Garden can be detected in several commissions preceeding the Yellow Book, including the previously cited design for the tenth annual dinner of the Playgoer's Club; a never realized plan to illustrate a book entitled Masques for Pick-Me-Up; and his frontispiece for a new Bodley Head edition of John

Davidson's Plays published in March, 1894 (fig. 143).³⁷ At this point it is worth briefly digressing to examine the last work since it sheds much light on the more controversial magazine cover.³⁸ In the frontispiece a number of Beardsley's closest associates were shown in fancy dress surrounding the opera house's manager, Augustus Harris. Those present included the artist's naked sister, Mabel Beardsley; Oscar Wilde as Bacchus; and possibly Henry Harland as a faun, Richard LeGallienne as a masked pierrot and the ballet dancer Adeline Genée.³⁹

According to Beardsley's own description in a letter to his friend, Robert Ross, the frontispiece illustrated Davidson's last play in the volume, 'Scaramouch in Naxos'.⁴⁰ The play centred on the exploits of an English showman, Scaramouch, who, accompanied by his assistants, Harlequin and Columbine, went to the island of Naxos (a well established haunt of the gods) to hire Bacchus to star in his new show. Throughout the piece much of the humour revolved around the self-made Scaramouch with his hard sales pitch, flashy advertising gimmicks, and obsession with money. When the showman finally met Bacchus, the god turned him into a circus monkey for presuming to hire a god as a publicity stunt.

Press reviews of Davidson's new edition of plays generally seem to have been favourable, many critics detecting a Shakespearian influence. While one reviewer predicted that the author's 'copious Elizabethanisms' would limit Davidson's appeal to a small circle, the majority seem to have felt they raised the tone of the volume.³⁸ The Daily Chronicle noted with some relief that Davidson had conspicuously avoided the

dangerous modern tendency of realism:

They [Davidson's plays] illustrate no "tendencies", and they soar as far out of the reach of realism as it is possible to mount. They illustrate nothing but the eternal verities of human love and laughter, not altogether forgetting human tears; but their most refreshing characteristic is their sheer delight in poetry for its own sake.... Mr. Davidson has mastered one of the first principles of all art: its independence, indeed its defiance of time and space.(39)

Not surprisingly, the same writer criticized Beardsley's illustration of 'Scarmouch':

Mr. Beardsley has contributed a frontispiece, apropos of "Saramouch in Naxos", in which one or two well-known faces of the day are to be recognized - an error of taste which is to be regretted.(40)

Beardsley's error - the references to specific contemporaries - was precisely what Davidson had been praised for avoiding.

To make matters worse, the artist proceeded to demean himself further by entering the critical fray. Writing to the editor of the Daily Chronicle, Beardsley humorously defended his inclusion of recognized characters:

Sir,

In your review of Mr. Davidson's plays, I find myself convicted of an error of taste, for having introduced portraits into my frontispiece to that book. I cannot help feeling that your reviewer is unduly severe. One of the gentlemen who form part of my decoration is surely beautiful enough to stand the test even of portraiture, the other owes me half a crown.(41)

In effect, he was simply underlining a joke that few of his middle-class contemporaries would have missed - Wilde being the beautiful gentleman and Harris owing Beardsley the price of a ticket refund.

Basically Beardsley had directly quoted from the standard, much caricatured features of Harris and Wilde, as an earlier cartoon by Spy of Harris in Vanity Fair demonstrates (fig. 144).

Although Harris and Wilde would have been easily identified by the general public, Beardsley's other acquaintances probably would have remained anonymous providing an inside joke for friends. Nevertheless, as far as the public was concerned, these other figures would have been significant as recognizable masquerade types, especially the harlequin and the ballet girl, which were very popular costumes during the early nineties, and, as we shall see in a moment, heavily loaded with sexual connotations in the popular press. Reinforced by the presence of Wilde and the obvious sexual symbols of a nude woman and satyr, the risqué associations of the masquerade were doubtlessly magnified. It is scarcely surprising that when confronted with the Yellow Book's cover only a few weeks later, most critics drew indelible connections between Covent Garden and moral corruption.

IV Flirtatious Folly or Serious Socio-Sexual Transgression?

It is important to distinguish between coquetry which was permissible and even 'good fun' if kept within acceptable limits and the intolerable kinds of 'corruption' with which Beardsley became popularly associated. Widespread examples of the former appeared throughout the illustrated press. Typically concentrating on light episodes of

heterosexual flirtation, 'At the Fancy Ball' and 'Folly at the Fancy Ball' from the Sketch depict the usual type of encounters between an amorous clown and a beautiful young ballet girl (figs. 145-146). In these instances, the sexual liaisons remain relatively innocent in two vital respects. First of all, no blatantly improper behaviour is taking place, and second, the couple is of roughly the same age and social background (i.e. they are most likely young, high-spirited, City workers). This reading is suggested by the fact that the man is costumed which was more often true of men at the lower end of the social spectrum in contrast to the top hats and formal wear of the other males in 'Folly at the Fancy Ball' (fig. 146). To a large extent the costume legitimizes his advances towards the alluring ballet girl. He is a social equal flirting, rather than a superior (in age or rank) seducing. The distinction is crucial because ballerinas were frequently cast as symbols of working women's vulnerability in numerous cartoons depicting the smooth stage-door johnny manipulating her naivety. 'Are you sure you love me?' (fig. 147) from Pick-Me-Up provides a classic case in point.

However, all clowns and dancers were not necessarily charmingly innocent, as 'Clippings from Pierrot's Diary' (fig. 148) and Dudley Hardy's 'Women's Rights' (fig. 149) demonstrate. In both cases, more cynical views of pierrot's intentions and the ballerina's charms were presented. The latter is particularly interesting since it also mounts an attack on the contemporary women's suffrage movement with its many debates on women's rights. The title of the cartoon attempts to subvert a feminist notion of women's rights by advocating that women's real power

lies not in organized female activity, but rather in the individual's potential for captivating men by her beauty. Hardy's traditional representation of the *femme fatale* pulling the strings of the male puppet acquires a new relevance not only from the title, but also through the use of modern illustrative conventions which repeatedly caricatured the New Woman dwarfing puny mannikins (e.g. figs. 12, 49, and 87). The cartoon parodies the demands of New Women by 'exposing' one behaving in the eternally feminine fashion. This construction of a transcendent femininity undermines any notions of progressive change - the woman may look modern but her old-fashioned behaviour is designed to reassure male viewers that this is merely an illusion.

Hardy not only attacks female activists, he also mocks their male defenders by portraying them as utterly helpless puppets, manipulated to work against their own interests. Like the New Woman who betrayed middle-class ideals of femininity, the male supporter of women's rights was viewed as a deviant traitor to both his class and sex. During the 1890s when both pro- and anti-suffragists concentrated their forces on lobbying an exclusively male parliament, the pro-feminist male was a particular source of anxiety. He was seen as the figure that would open the floodgates of sexual change. The anti-feminist, Lynn Linton, railed against these unnatural men claiming the worst types were effeminate advocates of the New Morality:

But the miserable little mannikin who creeps to obscurity; overshadowed by his wife's glory, is as pitiful in history as contemptible in fact. 'The husband of his wife' is no title to honour; and the best and dearest of our famous women take care that this should

not be said of them and theirs. The wild women, on the contrary, burke their husbands altogether; and even when they are not widows act as if they were...[She goes on to condemn] those effeminated worshippers who wrap themselves round in the trailing skirts of the idol and shout for her rights, because they are not virile enough to respect their own.(45)

Although the miserable little mannikin of Hardy's cartoon does not appear to refer to a specific individual, the implications of the male puppet in connection with the title 'Women's Rights!' probably would not have escaped many Sketch readers.⁴⁶

In spite of Hardy's intention to mock the issue of feminism, the net result remains a disturbing conflation of male anxieties which are not convincingly resolved. Although the concept of the new woman and her rights are satirized, the ballerina remains disconcertingly powerful and larger than life. She cannot be reduced to a simple passive object of male sexual pleasure. Further concern may have been generated by the male puppet which was presented in the guise of the stereotypical stage-door johnny in evening attire, top-hat, monocle and buttonhole flower (Compare with figs. 25 and 84.) The emasculation of this classically macho type works against Hardy's assertion of an eternally subordinate femininity.

The idea that Hardy's image was problematic is confirmed by a curious cartoon of it entitled 'Fin-De-Siecle Art' (fig. 150) which conspicuously parodied Beardsley's style, rather than that of Hardy. Significantly the cartoon appeared in a May 1894 edition of Pick-Me-Up during the height of the publicity surrounding Beardsley's first Yellow Book designs. Although the ballerina and mannikin were unmistakably

drawn from Hardy, most of the other elements were directly taken from Beardsley's original drawing for Wilde's Salomé, 'J'ai Baise Ta Bouche Ioakanaan' (fig. 71) which was published in the first volume of Studio in 1893.

The purpose of the Pick-Me-Up cartoon has noticeably shifted: instead of mocking women's rights, modern art comes under fire. The usual charges against its obscurity and lack of aesthetic merit are emphasized by the subtitle 'The Latest Puzzle. Find out what it's all about, what it means, and where the art comes in.' Most important for our purposes is the fact that the woman is transformed into a monstrous witch with unruly spikes of hair that match her bizarre surroundings. Instead of being fascinated by the woman, the male mannikin turns his back on her while an ominous black cat stares at her in terror. When executed in Beardsley's style, Hardy's ballerina is changed into Salomé, terrible femme fatale and murderess. Instead of putting women in their place, the second cartoon singles out and condemns Beardsley for presenting such misplaced women as art.

The basic problem with Beardsley's masquerade encounters was that they seldom could be interpreted innocently. A rare exception was his frontispiece design for the third volume of the Yellow Book (fig. 151) which featured a woman dancing with a masked harlequin. Despite the slightly furtive glance of the clown, nothing improper takes place. Perhaps for this reason, the picture was universally ignored by press reviewers who had come to expect more shocking fare. More typical, was

Beardsley's illustration for To-Day's regular theatrical column entitled, 'Stage-Land' (fig. 152) which was used during April and May. Indeed, reviewers of the first Yellow Book may have been familiar with this particular example of Beardsley's masquerade motifs. Again the masqueraders were clearly located on the ground floor of the opera house with the private boxes in the background. The act of the grotesque, masked pierrot fingering the breast of a heavily made-up and overdressed aging woman could have only carried connotations of the most debased debauchery.

In fact, the striking compositional similarities between the two pictures indicate that the first Yellow Book cover may have been a later modification of the To-Day design. Particularly noteworthy is the resemblance of the women's facial features, hair-styles, and posing of the masked figure leaning over her shoulder. Significantly as the masthead of a theatrical column, To-Day's design appeared in a much smaller format (approximately 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches) compared with the cover of the Yellow Book (approximately 8 1/4 x 6 1/4 inches). Its smaller size, less conspicuous location and publication in an 'advanced' socialist magazine probably enabled Beardsley to get away with a much more risqué design than was possible on the front of the Yellow Book. Although critics did not specifically mention the To-Day design in their reviews of the Yellow Book cover, a reference to To-Day appeared in Punch's parody of the Avenue poster (fig. 89). There the Punch writer noted that the poster design was 'not so daring as To-Day's!' Certainly if reviewers had been aware of Beardsley's To-Day design, it would have magnified the sinister

connotations of the Yellow Book cover.

But ultimately how does one assess the impact of such images of 'abnormal' sexuality in 1894? Certainly the disquieting misogynist connotations of the picture cannot be ignored. Like the ugly Mary Queen of Scots in 'Who'd Have Thought It?' (fig.130), the woman is indulging in what would have been regarded as inappropriate behaviour for someone of her age. Her overcharged sexuality apparently accounts for the type of freak she attracts - the implication being that 'normal' men would have nothing to do with such a creature. Her eighteenth century appearance including a prominent facial mole and a large plumed hat amplifies the connotations of a deviant loose morality. However, it would be unduly simplistic to assume this was a straight forward instance of Beardsley confirming the prevailing sexual mores. The image of a woman, especially an older one, evidently enjoying such attention challenged the dominant notion of women's passive, primarily maternally oriented desires. Furthermore, by making such abnormal behaviour visible in the conventional forum of popular magazine illustration during an era of literary prosecution Beardsley was clearly defying the status-quo. However, this statement, like so many of Beardsley's images of women, seems perplexingly ambivalent. Essentially Beardsley was publicizing a marginalized position without forcing his viewers to question the criteria of that marginality. Hence although images of deviancy became visible, they continued to function as the exceptions that prove the rule.

Within a short space of time, Beardsley seems to have secured a

reputation as an artist of risqué masked revelries. J. Hearn (Weirdsley Daubery) was quick to exploit this well known aspect of Beardsley's work in a poster design for an Oxford production of 'Pygmalion' in June 1894 (fig. 153).⁴⁷ Parodying Beardsley's style Hearn amalgamated a number of motifs from the first Yellow Book (e.g. the candle from the front cover [fig. 132], and the pierrot from either the bookplate of John Lumsden [fig. 154] or the 'Stage-Land' from To-Day [fig. 152]). The composite figure of the woman is particularly noteworthy - her head and shoulders resembling the masquerader of the back cover (fig. 133) and her dress being derived from the prostitute in 'L'Education Sentimentale' (fig. 23). Here too the implications of sexual license were unavoidable.

As if suggestions of seduction, promiscuity, and prostitution were not dangerous enough, some of Beardsley's Yellow Book images went even further, openly transgressing sexual norms. Of course, the most striking example of this was his series of three drawings entitled 'The Comedy Ballet of Marionettes as performed by the troupe of the Theatre-Impossible' (figs. 30-32) in the second issue of the magazine. While the implications of the women's lesbian relationship has been examined earlier in the first section, it is worth noting that there are grounds for believing their activities involved some form of masquerade as the symbolic unmasking of the heroine in the final picture implies.⁴⁸ The horrified outrage which greeted these illustrations possibly further tainted the critics' view of Beardsley's masquerade pictures, endowing even the fairly innocuous with sinister undercurrents.

Finally it is striking how Beardsley's critics seem to have concentrated on his masqueraders as particular sources of sexual concern. Punch's cartoon (fig. 155) of Beardsley's frontispiece of Juvenal (fig. 156) from the fourth Yellow Book added a group of four revellers (one of whom is masked) to a cart that is pulled by a transvestite Beardsley. Again these masqueraders are disturbingly located within a private box. Their hideously coarse features, thick lips and plunging necklines instantly signalled immorality. The male with a flower in his hair evidently shared Beardsley's passion for plumes, bows, pinafores and frilly knickers. While transvestism was frequently a component of fancy dress, it required special caution if the undesirable associations of homosexuality were to be avoided.⁴⁹ The fact that it could be handled without giving offence was demonstrated by the enormous success of Charley's Aunt, a farce written by Brandon Thomas for the comedian W.S. Penly to play in drag. The piece was performed continuously at the Globe Theatre from the end of 1892 until 1896.⁵⁰ In fact, Walter Sickert contributed a sketch of Penly as Charley's Aunt to the third volume of the Yellow Book (fig. 157) which was generally considered a clever rendition of a somewhat hackneyed subject.⁵¹ The crucial factor in such acceptable forms of transvestism (particularly in the case of males in female attire) was the element of humour or farce. Otherwise why would men adopt the dress of sexual inferiors? Curiously, in the 1890s (and also in the 1980s), less stigma was attached to females donning male fashions. Perhaps because they were appropriating clothing with a higher symbolic status, their actions were more readily explicable.

The problem with Beardsley was the fact that neither he nor his illustrations were very funny. Instead of providing comic relief, the ambiguous sexuality of many figures in his pictures confused and revolted the bulk of his viewers. As seen in the first section, the issue was aggravated by Beardsley's 'deviant' public persona which was the main subject of Punch's attack on his Juvenal frontispiece.⁵²

In spite of their expressions of confusion and revulsion, many of Beardsley's contemporaries were undoubtedly intrigued by the opportunity of viewing a titillating range of taboos. Although the peep show aspect of the first cover was loudly condemned, the volume sold more copies than any subsequent issue of the magazine. Ironically, the very feelings of disgust that Beardsley's images aroused must have confirmed the moral righteousness of many middle-class viewers. After all, it is only by being able to identify deviance that norms can be constructed and maintained.

Although theoretically the masquerade's appeal was based on the concept of transcending everyday social and sexual restrictions, in practice, the old distinctions merely acquired new forms. Of course this is not to deny the fact that the participants perceived the change as exciting and liberating. Yet, as discussed earlier, behaviour was carefully monitored either through exclusivity at private functions, or different levels of admission and behavioural expectation at public affairs. In the 1890s, such social and sexual distinctions were crucial - the upper and middle classes watching the working classes perform,

with the onus of that performance falling most heavily on doubly oppressed women who had to justify the privilege of mingling with their superiors by providing an alluring and glamorous spectacle.

Section Four Footnotes

¹
 Ardern Holt, Fancy Dresses Described (London: Debenham & Freebody, 5th ed., 1887), p. 9. This was probably the most authoritative and widely used handbook on the subject during the 1890s.

²
 Henry Harland, 'Aubrey Beardsley', Academy (December 10, 1898), p. 437

³
 Henry Maas, J.L. Duncan and W.G. Good, eds., The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1970).

⁴
 The most striking example is found in Malcolm Easton Aubrey and the Dying Lady (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), pp. 149-55. He takes Beardsley's comments as a serious indication of latent homosexuality and transvestism, speculating that Mabel, Beardsley's sister, may have taken part in the event. He also establishes a medical profile with the broken, mother-dominated, family as a formative influence in the creation of such personality types - all of which is posited as relevant to Beardsley's personal situation. Miriam J. Benkowitz, Aubrey Beardsley: An Account of His Life (London: Hamilton, 1981), p. 109 also cites the comment. However her speculations are more cautiously confined to seeing it as proof of Beardsley's awareness of the underside of London life.

⁵
 Arthur Symonds, 'Aubrey Beardsley', Fortnightly Review (May 1898), p. 755.

⁶
 Jules Cheret, Dudley Hardy, and Aubrey Beardsley, 'The Art of the Hoarding', New Review 11 (July 1894): 47-55, and 'An Apostle of the Grotesque', Sketch (April 10, 1895), p. 561.

⁷
 This illustration was also reproduced in Ernest Maindron, Les Affiches Illustrées (Paris: H. Launette, 1886). Cheret's well known series for the masked balls at the Theatre de l'Opera were certainly known to Beardsley and his circle of Bodley Head writers.

⁸
 The lack of stylistic similarities between Beardsley's designs and those of leading Parisian poster artists has also been observed by such modern art historians as Easton, Aubrey and the Dying Lady, pp. 18-19.

⁹
 Stanley Weintraub, Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse

(University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p. 88

10

Consult Edward Bella, ed., A Collection of Posters: The Illustrated Catalogue of the First Exhibition (London: Royal Aquarium, 1894). Three examples of Cheret's masquerade posters were no. 39 'Elysee Montmartre: Masked Ball Every Tuesday' (1890), no. 53 'Carnival Ball at the Opera' (1892), and no. 62 which was the of the same title for 1894. The two works by Beardsley were no.4 'Avenue Theatre' (1894) and no. 5 'Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries' (1894). For reviews of the exhibition, see: 'An Exhibition of Posters', Pall Mall Budget (25 October, 1894): 21-22; 'An Exhibition of Posters', Pall Mall Gazette (29 October, 1894):4; L. Raven-Hill, 'The Possibilities of the Poster', Pick-Me-Up (10 November, 1894): 92-93; 'Artistic Posters', Saturday Review (15 December, 1894): 657; and 'Posters as Pictures', Sketch (7 November, 1894): 82.

11

This was a tradition constructed by various nineteenth century writers on the subject, consult, 'Masquerades and Tea-Gardens A Hundred Years Ago', All the Year Round (24 March, 1894): 277-282.

12

For a discussion of the royal fancy dress balls, see Lou Taylor, 'Dressed for the Masquerade', Country Life (May 6, 1971): 1112-1114, and Sarah Stevenson and Helen Bennett, Van Dyck in Check Trousers: Fancy Dress in Art and Life 1700 - 1900 (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1978).

13

See Stephenson and Bennett, Van Dyck, p. 87. They mention that the design houses of Worth and Paquin were especially popular. For the Devonshire House Ball, the Duke of Marlborough's Louis XV costume was made by Worth of Paris. The waistcoat, alone, took several girls almost a month to sew on each pearl and diamond by hand. The whole outfit cost 5,000 francs which although exceptionally high even by late nineteenth century aristocratic standards, indicates the scale of such affairs.

14

'Fancy Dress Ball at the St. John's Wood Schools of Art', Sketch (March 1, 1893), p. 311.

15

'What the Yellow Book is to be', Sketch (April 11, 1894), p. 558, and Weekly Sun (April 24, 1894), p. 1.

16

'Charmingly eccentric' was used in the Weekly Irish Times (April 1894), p. 4 in a review which has been attributed to Katherine

Tynan. See Nelson, Nineties, p. 301. Tynan was also a Bodley Head author. The second quotation is from Yellow Book II (July 1894), p. 186-187.

17
National Observer (April 21, 1894), p. 588.

18
Pall Mall Gazette (April 21, 1894), p. 4.

19
Vanity Fair (April 19, 1894), p. 240.

20
Whitehall Review (April 28, 1894), p. 13.

21
Academy (April 28, 1894), p. 349.

22
The Pick-Me-Up supplement was basically the Victorian equivalent of a Playboy centre-fold or page three photograph of the Sun. 'Phoebe' (fig. 58) provides a classic case in point.

23
For instance this is discussed by William Tait, Magadalenism: An Inquiry into the Extent, Causes and Consequences of Prostitution in Edinburgh (Edinburgh: P. Rickhard, 1840), pp. 135-136.

24
R.A. Vogler, The Graphic Works of George Cruikshank (London: Dover, 1979). For a discussion of Solomon's picture, consult Lynn Nead, 'The Magdalen in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting', Oxford Art Journal 7 (1984): 26-27.

25
Philip Hamerton, 'The Yellow Book: A Criticism of Volume I', Yellow Book II (July 1894), p. 186-87, and Spectator (May 19, 1894), p. 695.

26
Figaro (April 26, 1894), p. 5.

27
Harold Rosenthal, Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden (London: Putnam, 1958), p. 253.

28
For an excellent comic description of these events which seem to have been very similar to the later Covent Garden Balls, consult Count

Chicard (pseud.) The Bal Masque (London: D. Bogue, 1848).

29

According to an announcement for a Covent Garden fancy dress ball of February 26, 1895 in the Enthoven Theatre Collection (Victoria & Albert Museum) the admission price structure was:

single admission ticket	1 guinea
private boxes	5, 6, or 10 guineas
seats to view the ball:	
amphitheatre stalls	5 shillings
amphitheatre	2/6
supper	10/6

30

It would be interesting to know more about the social status of the women who opted to wear such costumes.

31

Leonore Davidoff, The Best Circles (London: Croom Helm, 1973), p. 65.

32

'Covent Garden Fancy Dress Ball', Sketch (March 21, 1894), p. 390

33

I have found few direct comments on the social status of ball-goers in the 1890s. A useful earlier discussion of this issue can be found in Chicard, Bal Masque.

34

Such celebrities at a ball in February, 1894 included Little Tich, a contemporary music hall star who was reportedly 'followed by an amused crowd wherever he went'. See Sketch (February 7, 1894), p. 63. The Lloyd sisters also of music hall fame appeared at several balls.

35

St James Gazette (April 18, 1894), p. 15.

36

'Covent Garden Fancy Dress Ball', Sketch (February 15, 1893), p. 187.

37

Masques was a project Beardsley intermittently discussed in his letters of 1893 from August until late November. At one point Robert Ross was going to write the verses for Beardsley's illustrations until Beerbohm superseded him. According to Beardsley, the publishers of Pick-Me-Up had agreed to bring out his designs in a book form after initially publishing them in the magazine, see Maas et al., Letters, p. 51. It seems reasonable to assume that Beardsley's intentions for Masques

ultimately found their way into the Yellow Book which once again suggests that the popular press is a more logical point of comparison for Beardsley's pictures than other 'high art' objects.

38

The frontispiece to Davidson's Plays, as Beardsley's sole illustration in the book, only elicited passing remarks from literary critics. Obviously this contrasts sharply with the high profile nature of the Yellow Book where Beardsley contributed a number of designs as art editor.

39

The identities of all but Oscar Wilde and Augustus Harris have been variously debated by art historians. This however, does not really matter here, since it was Wilde and Harris that seem to have interested reviewers most.

40

The letter is dated November, 1893. See Maas et al., Letters, p. 58.

41

The objection was raised in 'Davidson's Plays', Saturday Review (March 31, 1894), pp. 342-43, while such reviews as 'A Modern Elizabethan', Spectator (March 31, 1894), pp. 439-40 took a more positive view.

42

Daily Chronicle (1 March, 1894), p. 3.

43

Ibid.

44

Maas et al. Letters, 65.

45

Lynn Linton, 'The Wild Women as Politicians', Nineteenth Century (March 1891), pp. 82-83.

46

The notion that the mannikin is not a reference to a particular person is reinforced by his tiny size and lack of distinguishing features. Furthermore, he does not seem to be based on such standard types as found in Vanity Fair cartoons.

47

The poster achieved a fairly high degree of notoriety being included in an exhibition of posters at the London Aquarium in October, 1894 and later being published in Charles Hiatt, Picture Posters (London: George Bell and Sons, 1895), p. 225.

48

Brian Reade, Aubrey Beardsley (New York: Bonanza Books, 1967) p. 345-46.

49

For example, the women in fig. 140 are shown in male costumes, not that this detracts from their exaggerated femininity.

50

J.P. Wearing, The London Stage 1890-1899 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976).

51

Whitehall Review (October 27, 1894), p. 15.

52

Easton, Aubrey and the Dying Lady, pp. 148-155 discusses why the issue of males in drag was a graver offence than females in male dress. It was a heavily prosecuted offence which was believed to be tied to illicit procurement, sodomy, and blackmail. However, unlike Easton, I do not particularly care whether not Beardsley was a transvestite, but rather how the public's perception of him influenced the response to his pictures.

Epilogue

In many respects, like the masquerades discussed in the last section, the 'advanced' contributions to the Yellow Book presented the spectacle of social 'outsiders' performing for middle class entertainment. The inhabitants of the East End and emancipated heroines of New Women writers along with Beardsley's pictures of actresses, prostitutes, and other sexually deviant women evidently fascinated a suburban public. Both the novelty of the magazine's content and its relatively inexpensive format must have initially appealed to its upwardly mobile, fashion-conscious consumers. The fact that the first volume ran to a third printing shows how well the publisher and editors had gauged their market. However, selling novelties and the latest trends was a high risk business. The huge profits which could be made at the outset soon evaporated as the commodity was superseded by newer, more fashionable items. In spite of the publisher's efforts to promote the Yellow Book as a durable collector's item, there were signs that by the third issue interest in the venture was waning. Sales declined, reviews were shorter and scarcer, and establishment critics triumphantly pointed out the accuracy of their predictions that the magazine would wither away once its shock value was exhausted.¹ The Spectator analyzed the situation:

When a publication of this kind reaches its third number and can no longer be looked on as a novelty or a "sport" of the literary "genus", it is time to ask seriously what place it takes among contemporary literature, and of what value it is an exponent of art. [The writer went on to conclude]...we imagine it [the Yellow Book] can only be placed among the ephemeral magazines and periodicals of the day. (2)

All of these indications run counter to Lane's widely accepted claim that it was the trials of Oscar Wilde that killed the Yellow Book.³ Instead one could argue that it provided Lane with an immediate incentive for changing the format of a magazine with falling sales. Here I am referring to Lane's well-known dismissal of Beardsley as the magazine's art editor and his last-minute removal of all Beardsley's designs from the fifth volume which was published in April 1895. However, this is not to deny that the magazine's circulation continued to decline after Beardsley's departure or that the trials of Oscar Wilde had serious cultural and sexual repercussions.

On the contrary, the ensuing wave of moral panic surrounding the trials and imprisonment of Wilde played havoc with the market for work by identifiably decadent and New Women writers. Publishers like Lane hastily toned down their risqué profile. To some extent this was forced on Lane by the objections of more conservative authors like Mrs. Humphrey Ward who led the protests against Beardsley, but it also made good business sense. Elkin Mathews also felt obliged to issue an announcement to the Westminster Gazette disavowing all knowledge of Shelley, one of Wilde's homosexual partners, who claimed to have been introduced to the author through one of the publishers of the Bodley Head.⁴

In an atmosphere of press-manipulated hysteria, the homosexual labelling of Wilde quickly infected virtually all aspects and practitioners of the New Art. Although these connections were not made during the course of the trials, a spate of articles appeared making

these links and condemning those who claimed to practice 'Art for Art's sake'.⁵ In one of the most vitriolic entitled '"New" Art at the Old Bailey' in the Speaker, the writer claimed:

For many years past Mr. Wilde has been the real leader in this country of the "new school" in literature - the revolutionary and anarchist school which has forced itself into such prominence in every domain of art. The new criticism, the new fiction, the new poetry, even the new woman, are all, more or less, the creatures of Oscar Wilde's fancy. (6)

Further on in the article the writer singled out the 'problem play' dealing with adultery, and the sexual novels of female writers as especially pernicious. Similarly she/he made a thinly veiled attack on the Yellow Book describing it as:

The review of the "new school", in which artist and writer combine to inflict nastiness upon us in every page, and wherein the ordinary reader is never quite certain that the language which to him seems merely dull and vulgar may not convey ideas of indescribable horror to the initiated,...(7)

In April 1895 the formerly saleable aspect of Beardsley's public persona became an instant liability. With a complete lack of alternatives, he started working on very limited circulation projects for the quasi-pornographic publisher Leonard Smithers. As far as the general public was concerned, Beardsley largely vanished from view. The next sustained wave of Beardsley publicity followed his death in 1899. One obituary from that year published in the Outlook discussed his short-lived notoriety:

The public, we fancy, never followed Beardsley much further than this middle period, when his posters were on every hoarding and his Yellow Book drawings the subject of all manner of strangely directed attention. Punch caricatured him, the weeklies devoted more or less intelligent articles to him. He was notorious....Public

interest in his drawings seems to have ceased shortly after his withdrawal from the art editorship of Mr. John Lane's venture. (8)

While Beardsley's loss of employment is one of the best known cases, it should be pointed out that New Women writers also suffered from the changing climate of opinion. However, in most cases, it is hard to assess how much this was a question of a fad being played out and how much it was a direct response to Wilde's trials. Florence Farr, for instance, was unable to interest any publishers in her manuscript, originally entitled 'The New Woman' which Richard Le Gallienne (Lane's chief reader) felt was too fresh in people's memories and in any case too hackneyed.⁹ Evidently New Women writers started experiencing the same difficulties the suffragists had encountered when trying to maintain public interest over an extended period of time. The position of New Women, however, was much more awkward since they were no longer able to walk the tight-rope of piquing public interest without invoking crippling moral sanctions. Unlike 'respectable' suffragists who continued to working behind the scenes lobbying and petitioning, the main activity of New Women writers and actresses had been publicizing their point of view. Essentially, they too disappeared from the public stage around the same time that Beardsley dropped into obscurity.

Epilogue: Footnotes

¹
Only the first volume went into a second and third printing. The five thousand copies of the first printing seem to have met the demand for volumes two and three.

²
Spectator (November 17, 1894), pp. 700-701

³
Stanley Weintraub, Aubrey Beardsley: Imp of the Perverse (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p. 126.

⁴
'The Wilde Case - Accused Under Remand', Westminster Gazette (April 8, 1895), p. 5.

⁵
'Art', Westminster Gazette (April 6, 1895), p. 1. For a contemporary discussion of the press hysteria surrounding the trials, see 'Topics of the Day: The Wilde Case', Whitehall Review (May 14, 1895), p. 1.

⁶
'"New" Art at the Old Bailey', Speaker (April 13, 1895), p. 403.

⁷
Ibid., p. 404.

⁸
A.K. 'Aubrey Beardsley', Outlook (April 8, 1899), p. 3.

⁹
Josephine Johnson, Florence Farr: Bernard Shaw's 'New Woman' (Gerard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1975), p. 63.

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St. James Gazette
Standard
Star
Sun
Westminster Gazette

Weeklies

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Answers
Athenaeum
Black and White
Bookman
Bookseller
Court Circular
Court Journal
Dramatic Review
Educational Times
Era
Gentlewoman
Graphic
Illustrated London News
In Town
Inquirer
Lady
Ladies Pictorial
Life
London Figaro
Man of the World

Modern Society
National Observer
News of the World
Observer
Pall Mall Budget
Pelican
People
Penny Illustrated Paper
Pick-Me-Up
Public Opinion
Publisher's Circular
Punch
Queen
Review of Reviews
Reynold's Weekly Newspaper
St. Paul's
St. James Budget
Saturday Review
Scraps
Sketch
Speaker
Spectator
Strand Magazine
Sunday Times
To-Day
Tit-Bits
Topical Times
Truth
Vanity Fair
Weekly Sun
Weekly Times and Echo
Westminster Budget
Whitehall Review
Woman
Woman's Signal
World

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Contemporary Review
Cornhill Magazine
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